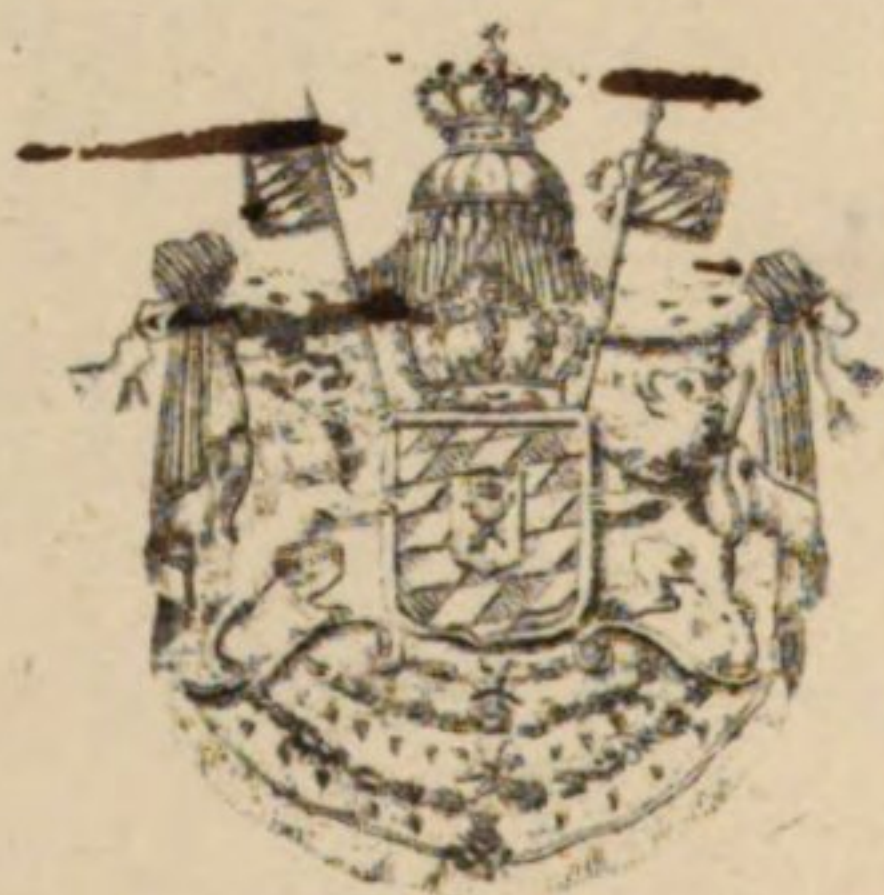




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Parliamentary History

ENGLAND

THE HISTORY OF

THE PARLIAMENTS

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FROM WHICH LAST MENTIONED PARLIAMENTS ARE

DOWNWARDS IN THE SEVERAL VOLUMES

VOL. XXXIII.

PARLIAMENTS DEBATED

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1797,

TO THE THIRTIETH DAY OF NOVEMBER,

1798.

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T. C. BARNARD

1818.

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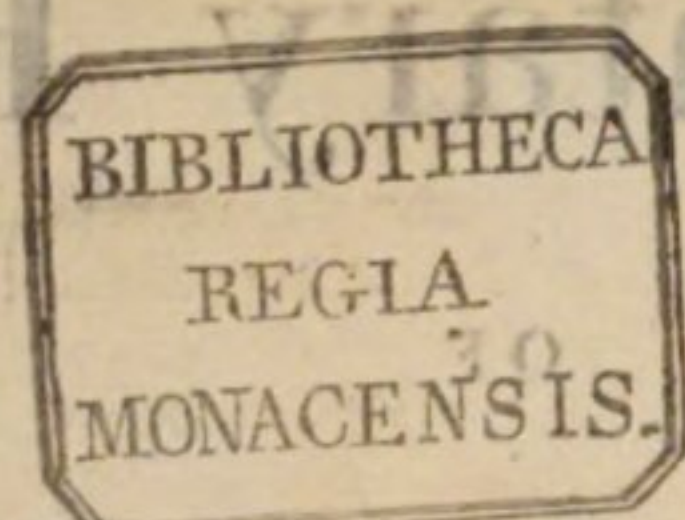
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1791.	- - - - - Carlisle	Hon. Edward Vernon.
1787.	- - - - - Chester	William Cleaver.
1791.	- - - - - Durham	Hon. Shute Barrington.

LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR.

1793. Jan. 28. Alexander, Lord Loughborough. In 1801, created Earl of Rosslyn.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL.

1796. Sept. 24. John, Earl of Chatham.

LORD PRIVY SEAL.

1798. Feb. 14. John, Earl of Westmorland.

PRINCIPAL SECRETARIES OF STATE.

Home Department.

1794. July 11. William Henry, Duke of Portland.

Foreign Department.

1791. May Lord Grenville.

War Department.

1794. July Right Hon. Henry Dundas.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

1789. May 8. The Right Hon. Henry Addington.

COMMISSIONERS FOR EXECUTING THE OFFICE OF LORD HIGH TREASURER OF GREAT BRITAIN.

1797. July Right Hon. William Pitt ; and Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Hon. John Thomas Townshend.
John Smyth, esq.
Right Hon. Sylvester Douglas.
Charles Small Pybus, esq.

MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

1788. June 7. Sir Richard Pepper Arden, knt., afterwards Lord Alvanley.

ATTORNEY GENERAL.

1793 Feb. 13. Sir John Scott, knt., afterwards Lord Eldon.

I N D E X.

SOLICITOR GENERAL.

1793. Feb. 13. Sir John Mitford, knt., afterwards Lord Redesdale.

LORD ADVOCATE OF SCOTLAND.

1789. Robert Dundas, esq.

SECRETARY AT WAR.

1794. Right Hon. William Windham.

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Parliamentary History.

37 GEORGE THE THIRD, A. D. 1797.

FIRST SESSION

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH PARLIAMENT

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

[Continued from Vol. XXXII.]

DEBATE in the Commons on the Vote of Thanks to Sir John Jervis for the Victory over the Spanish Fleet.] March 3. 1797. Mr. Secretary Dundas said:—It was my intention this night to have given notice of a motion for Monday, not then conceiving the intelligence on which it is founded had got abroad so generally as I find it has done. Perceiving, however, that the intelligence is as extensively known as it is matter of the highest exultation, I cannot for one moment delay affording an opportunity to this House, to express those sentiments of admiration and gratitude which every British bosom must feel on such an occasion. Waving any detail, and satisfied that the general knowledge of the event will excite in this House the same rapturous sensations, which I understand have been already expressed by the public, it is only necessary for me to intimate, that accounts have this day arrived in town that a British admiral with fifteen sail of the line has fought, pursued, attacked and conquered a fleet of the enemy, consisting of twenty-seven sail of the line, and as trophies of this victory, the most signal that ever was achieved in the annals of the British navy, has sent into port as prizes two ships of 112 guns each, and two others, one of 80 and one of 70. Sure I am, that every British heart must be united to pay the gallant

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admiral that tribute of gratitude and admiration which is due to his admirable conduct and his eminent services. Penetrated with this feeling, I shall conclude with now moving, "That the thanks of this House to be given to Admiral Sir John Jervis, knight of the most honourable order of the Bath, for his able and gallant conduct in the most brilliant and decisive victory obtained over the Spanish fleet, on the 14th day of February last, by the fleet under his command."

Mr. Fox, in seconding the motion, said, he considered the victory as the most brilliant exploit in the annals of this country.

The motion was agreed to *nem. con.*

Mr. Keene did not conceive that a mere expression of thanks was a sufficient testimony of our sense of the merit of the gallant admiral. He thought it our indispensable duty to follow it up with a resolution that would substantially mark the deep impression we felt of the distinguished service that had been rendered to the country. He would therefore move, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to confer some signal mark of his royal favour upon Admiral Sir John Jervis, knight of the most honourable order of the Bath, for the important service rendered to his country, by the gallant and glorious exertions of the fleet, under his command, consisting of only fifteen sail of the line, and four frigates, over a fleet of his Catholic Majesty, amounting to twenty-seven sail of the line, and nine frigates."

Mr. Secretary Dundas thought it was not necessary for the House to interfere with the reward which was so eminently due to the illustrious admiral, or to take

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out of the hands of his majesty the task which peculiarly belonged to the royal office. It could not be suspected that in this instance, there would be any want of inclination on the part of the executive government, to do justice to the eminent services of the gallant admiral, and to meet the wishes of a grateful people.

Sir C. Bunbury thought the House could not discover too great a promptitude in conferring on the gallant admiral the most signal and unequivocal proof of their gratitude and admiration. This brave officer by his conduct had stamped a reputation which would be as lasting as the annals of British glory. The name of Jervis would ever be dear to his country. One of the captured ships suggested a title appropriate to the character of the gallant admiral "Salvador del Mundo."

Mr. Pitt said:—There can exist no difference of sentiment with respect to the extent and value of the services of the gallant admiral, or the feelings of gratitude and admiration which are due to his character. But even amidst those effusions of gratitude and admiration, which are peculiarly called forth by the brilliant exploit which engages our present attention, it is incumbent upon the House not to suffer themselves to be carried away by the impulse of their feelings, or, amidst the ardour of their acknowledgments, to confound those distinct functions which belong to the different branches of the legislature. I do not know that in any former instance, such a proceeding as that which is now proposed was sanctioned by the House. I can confidently refer to what took place with respect to the gallant services of Rodney, of Keppel, and of Howe; nor am I aware that any such proceeding was adopted with respect to the duke of Marlborough. Can it be supposed that the Crown can require to be prompted to pay the just tribute of approbation and honour to those who have eminently signalized themselves by their public services? On the part of his majesty's ministers, I can safely affirm, that before this last splendid instance of the good conduct of the gallant admiral, we have not been remiss in watching the uniform tenor of his professional career; we have witnessed in the whole of his proceedings, such instances of perseverance, of diligence, and of exertion in the public service, as though less brilliant and dazzling than this last exploit, are only less meritorious, as they are put in competi-

tion with the glory of a single day, which has produced such incalculable benefits to the British empire. I confess I should feel relieved by the consent of the hon. gentleman to withdraw his motion; but if he should persist in pressing it on the House, I shall meet it by moving the previous question.

Mr. Sheridan said:—I cannot submit to the doctrine that this House has no right to interfere to express its marked approbation of a distinguished character, or to apply to his majesty to signalize the most eminent public services by a peculiar mark of his royal favour. If there was any chance that the present motion would be passed unanimously, it should have my warmest support. I cannot allow the proud boast of the right hon. gentleman to pass unnoticed, that in no instance has there appeared on the part of the executive government any want of promptitude to reward the claims of public services. The very mention of the name of the honourable admiral must forcibly recall the recollection of his former services, and the degree of attention which they experienced from the executive government. No honour, no reward has hitherto followed from his gallant exertions which ministers feel themselves compelled to notice in terms of the highest panegyric. While they have withheld from him, and other illustrious characters the just reward of their merit, on whom have they thrown away their honours? On persons, who have no pretensions to professional desert, who can exhibit no claims of public services.

The motion was withdrawn. After which Mr. Dundas moved, 1. "That the thanks of this House be given to the vice-admirals Charles Thompson and the hon. William Waldegrave, rear-admiral William Parker, commodore (now rear-admiral) Horatio Nelson, captain (now sir Robert) Calder (knight), first captain to admiral sir John Jervis, and to the several captains and officers of the fleet under the command of the said admiral, for their bravery and gallant conduct on the above-mentioned most glorious occasion; and that admiral sir John Jervis do signify the same to them. 2. That this House doth highly approve of, and acknowledge the services of the seamen, marines, and soldiers, on board the ships under the command of admiral sir John Jervis, in the late most glorious victory over the Spanish fleet; and that the captains of

the several ships do signify the same to their respective crews, and do thank them for their gallant behaviour."

Mr. Grey thought the extraordinary success which resulted from the conduct of sir John Jervis, ought to be marked with a distinction as great as it was possible to confer. Such a measure was not without a precedent. In 1704, an address was agreed to by the Commons, humbly praying that her majesty would take into her consideration the propriety of carrying into execution some measure that might perpetuate the memory of the success which had attended her arms under the command of the duke of Marlborough.

The motions were agreed to *nem. con.*

Debate on Mr. Whitbread's Motion relative to the Invasion of Ireland.] Mr. Whitbread said:—I rise, Sir, to make the motion of which I gave notice. No man, Sir, can have a higher opinion than I have, of the courage, the gallantry, the skill and ability of the gallant admiral, and the officers and seamen acting under him, who have achieved an action so eminently glorious. No man can be more desirous of conferring on him and them every praise, and every exalted distinction, which such brilliant conduct deserves. At the same time, Sir, that I say this, I must beg leave to observe, that such glorious annals of the events are by no means unprecedented in the British navy. However, Sir, willing and desirous as I am to allow to this gallant action every possible degree of merit, I must beg leave to call the attention of the House to the circumstances which have just been related to us, concerning the situation and number of ships with which this gallant admiral has acquired so brilliant and so decisive a victory. The inequality of ships on our part, under the command of sir John Jervis, is very great, almost in a proportion of two to one. While, therefore, we view the splendour of this victory with every degree of admiration, it becomes us seriously to consider, whether the circumstance alone does not loudly call for an inquiry into the conduct of the first lord of the admiralty, for his neglect of reinforcing the squadron which was in a service so distant as that of the Mediterranean. when he knew that the Spaniards were added to the list of our naval adversaries. In my opinion, in the same degree of proportion in which we praise and admire the glorious victory which sir

John Jervis has obtained, in an equal degree ought we to affix culpability for so glaring a neglect as that of leaving him with such a prodigious inferiority of force. We are told, Sir, that with 15 ships of the line sir John Jervis has defeated a Spanish fleet, which consisted of 27 line of battle ships, of which he has taken four. Fortunate and glorious as this action has proved, we cannot but call to mind how dreadful would have been the fate of that memorable day, had victory declared itself in favour of the enemy. What, Sir, at this moment, must have been the sensations of the people of this country, if, in spite of all those superior abilities for which British officers and seamen are so eminently conspicuous, the reverse of the picture had this night been held up to us, and we had been told that sir John Jervis had been defeated, in consequence of the immense superiority of numbers in the fleet which the enemy brought into action against us? I have no doubt but the voice of the country at large would have called loudly and universally for an impeachment of the first lord of the admiralty. I think this House would, in such a case, have been ready to join the voice of the people, and to second them in so necessary a measure. The unparalleled success which has attended our fleet, by no means alters the state of the question. It was the duty of the first lord, and of his majesty's ministers, to have taken care that our fleet should bear some proportion to that of the enemy; and therefore, the inferiority being so very great, it is right that an inquiry into the conduct of ministers should immediately take place. The mismanagement of ministers has become notorious. The cry of inquiry into their conduct is gone abroad, and is echoed back upon us from every corner of the kingdom. Though this inquiry, therefore, has been so often refused, I think ministers cannot much longer keep it off; and as a preliminary or harbinger to that inquiry on a large scale which I have just now hinted at, I trust that the House will this night agree to the limited inquiry I have now in view, as to the conduct of ministers, with respect to the late attempt of the French to invade Ireland.—It is almost incredible to relate, but it is not less strange than it is true, that with a fleet, consisting of upwards of 500 vessels of war of various denominations, the captures, within the last three months, of our merchant ships, have been more numerous.

than in any three months which had ever preceded them. Of this immense number of ships of war, no less than ninety ships of the line are in the European seas. With such a force, how those captures could have been made, except from the culpable neglect of ministers, I am at a loss to imagine. The fact, however, is but too well ascertained to admit of a doubt. I now come, Sir, to speak of that particular neglect and misconduct which more immediately gives rise to the present motion. The first information on authority which this House received relative to the intention of the enemy to invade this country, was conveyed to us by his majesty's Speech on the opening of the present session. Measures were in consequence adopted by ministers, in order to repel this threatened attack upon us. Several bills were passed for putting the country into the best possible posture of defence. Information had been received through various channels, that Ireland was one object of the meditated attack. Had any measures been taken towards the defence of Ireland when the attempt to invade it was actually made? I believe not. From the letter of the commander in chief in that quarter of it, general Dalrymple, it appears, that instead of any effectual measures having been previously taken for an efficient defence, every thing remained to be done. He says, after mentioning the appearance of the enemy in Bantry Bay, that he will immediately proceed to put every thing into the most speedy and proper train, for the purpose of frustrating the design of the enemy. Is this being in a proper state of defence against such an active and enterprising enemy as we have to contend with? If it is, I am no judge of those matters. But, Sir, it appears by the most authentic information received from thence, that there was not any thing like an adequate force for defence in that part of the country. There were not at the time more, if so many, as 3,000 regular troops to oppose the whole force of the French. The city of Cork was, therefore, in the most imminent peril of falling into their hands, had not that God, who has so often favoured and protected this country, prevented it. In that city were contained stores and provisions of various kinds to the amount of nearly, if not quite, a million and a half sterling. Among those stores, were the provisions intended for the use of the British navy for the next year; so that had

they been taken or destroyed, the navy, splendid as its achievements have been at all times, when called into action, would have been for a year to come altogether annihilated. I must now, Sir, entreat the indulgence of the House while I go through a regular statement of the motions of the French fleet, and those of our own, from the time of the enemy quitting the harbour of Brest, and a short period antecedent thereto. Admiral Colpoys, with a fleet of fourteen or fifteen sail of the line, was lying off Brest harbour for some weeks. The French fleet, however, in defiance of this, sailed from Brest on the 15th of December. On the 20th of that month they arrived off the coast of Ireland, and some of them dropped anchor in Bantry Bay. I have here to observe, that previous to that, and during the time that admiral Colpoys was with his squadron lying off Brest, admiral Richery, with six French ships of the line, passed the squadron of admiral Colpoys, and got safe into Brest. On the 21st, the enemy cast anchor in Bantry Bay; so that they were at sea, and on the coast of Ireland, from the 18th of December to the 6th of January. On the 20th of December news arrived in England, that the French fleet had quitted Brest. From the 23d to the 25th, the wind was favourable for the squadron under the command of lord Bridport to have sailed. It continued fair on the 26th and 27th, after which it came a-head, and the fleet could not sail for some days. On the 31st, intelligence came to this country that the French fleet was off the coast of Ireland, and on the same day, admiral Colpoys, with the fleet under his command, arrived at Portsmouth. The reasons given for his return with this squadron are various and contradictory. One was, that his force was not sufficient to encounter that of the enemy. If that was a true reason, it furnishes an additional cause for inquiry into the conduct of ministers! What when they had received information of the extensive preparations going forward at Brest, shall we be told, after the large sums consumed in secret service money, and with the immense navy in our possession; that they ought not to have sent out fresh ships to reinforce that squadron? It is absurd on the face of it. Admiral Colpoys, however, must have received intelligence of the sailing of the Brest fleet. Did he sail in pursuit of them? Did he sail towards the coast of Portugal after

them, where it might have occurred to him they were gone? No. Did he sail after them towards the coast of Ireland? No: he sailed directly for Portsmouth, where he arrived on the very day that information was brought they were on the Irish coast. Another reason which has been given for the return of this squadron into port was, that it was short of provisions. In every view of every reason for its return, the most glaring misconduct stares us in the face. Is it possible to conceive, that in all the time admiral Colpoys lay with his squadron off Brest, either fresh ships properly victualled could not have been sent to relieve him, or transports with provisions have been forwarded to re-victual his fleet? The question answers for itself. In every thing I have said, respecting admiral Colpoys and the fleet under his command, or what I may hereafter say respecting lord Bridport, or any other of the gallant officers I may have occasion to name in the course of this debate, I beg leave to assure the House, that I have the highest respect for their several characters; and that I do not mean, in the slightest degree, to utter even a hint to their disadvantage. I mention matters in detail, as a statement of events, just as they occurred, and have no doubt but every one of those officers will be able to give the most satisfactory explanation of his own conduct. There is, Sir, also, another circumstance which occurred, and which appears very extraordinary. Admiral Elphinstone arrived in Ireland, in the *Monarch* of 74 guns, accompanied by a frigate. He gave notice at the castle, that he, with the ship under his command and the frigate, were ready to join any other force that might be appointed to go in search of the enemy. Admiral Kingsmill, who is stationed at Cork, also issued orders for several frigates and the *Monarch* to sail in quest of the enemy. Yet, on the 3d of January, we are informed that admiral Elphinstone arrived at Spithead, with the *Monarch*, without having seen any of the enemy's fleet. On the same day lord Bridport, with the squadron under his command, sailed from thence. He went first to Brest, which I have not the least doubt appeared to him to be the most likely track for falling in with the enemy's ships. In that idea, however, he was disappointed; for after some days waiting there to no effect or purpose, he thought it necessary to shape his course to the coast of

Ireland. In this farther pursuit he was equally unsuccessful, and on the 3d of February, he returned to Spithead with the fleet under his command, without having fallen in with, or even seen one single ship belonging to the shattered and dispersed fleet of the enemy. Thus the designs of the enemy were only frustrated by the winds and the safety of Ireland entirely abandoned to the chance of the elements. Such is the statement of events as they successfully occurred; and these are the grounds on which I mean to found my motion. Various are the objections which have from time to time been made to any inquiry pending a war. The intelligence which may be conveyed to the enemy, in consequence of many circumstances relative to our situation and resources being divulged, and which may be turned to our disadvantage. The detaining gallant officers from their respective commands, when they might be so much better employed. Notwithstanding all this, we have an instance of an inquiry having been granted towards the close of the last war in which the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Pitt) took an active part, in moving for various papers in support of the motion. I think I cannot conclude in more apt terms, than by using the words of a celebrated predecessor of yours,* Sir, who, after the failure of the fleet in the Mediterranean, in 1745, when he presented the bill of supplies, told the highest authority in this country, that "under such circumstances it would have been unbecoming and unpardonable in the House of Commons, not to have made this foul miscarriage the subject of their ancient, constitutional, and necessary power of inquiry into every public service." I therefore move, Sir, "That it be referred to a committee to inquire into the measures taken for the protection of Ireland, at the time of the late Attempt to invade that country by the French."

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said:—I am very glad the hon. gentleman has brought forward the discussion of this important transaction in the manner he has done, because it affords me an opportunity of refuting the various misrepresentations which have been industriously circulated respecting it. The mode which I intend to adopt as the most satisfactory and convincing, will be by troubling the House with a short and simple narrative of facts.

* Mr. Speaker Onslow. See Vol. 13, p. 1306.

But before I proceed to do that, it is necessary for me to dismiss the various topics with which the hon. gentleman has introduced his proposed inquiry. The hon. gentleman has inculpated the admiralty for not allowing sir John Jervis a force more adequate to that of the enemy which he defeated. But the hon. gentleman has certainly been misinformed when he undertook to say that sir John Jervis had only 15 sail of the line upon that station, for his actual appointment consisted of 20 sail of the line besides frigates. But it is to be recollected, that out of this allotted number, he left two behind him at Lisbon, in consequence of accidents upon the bar there, two more in the straits of Gibraltar, and another he sent home. If he had retained his whole complement, therefore, he would have had 20 sail of the line; besides frigates. It was, moreover, the intention of the admiralty, just before the arrival of the glorious news which they have this day received, to have sent him a farther reinforcement of five sail of the line: which ships, I believe, are now very nearly ready for their destination. I now come to the question itself, and upon this point I undertake to prove, that not the smallest blame is imputable either to the civil or military part engaged in that transaction. The hon. gentleman has stated, that we were obliged to the elements for the dispersion of the enemy's fleet upon the Irish coast. It is so far true, that we were obliged to the elements, but on the other hand, to the elements, and to the elements only, the French have been indebted for every part of that expedition. Although prior to the sailing of the French fleet from Brest, the admiralty had received intelligence that such a fleet was in preparation, it was not positively known whether it was intended to sail against Portugal or Ireland. The admiralty had some reason to believe, that either Portugal or Ireland was the object of its destination; and no man, I conjecture, however authentic his information might be, would have been bold enough to decide, that that which did not take place was not the most probable. There are obvious reasons, which it would be very indiscreet in me to publish, why an invasion of Portugal did not take place. I shall, therefore, proceed to determine whether ministers adopted such measures as circumstances seemed to require? I assert, that they took the best possible measures which could be taken with their

uncertainty of the enemy's designs; for it is to be observed, that they had not only to watch the hostile armaments of the enemy, and provide a sufficient force in every quarter, but were compelled moreover to provide an adequate force at the same time for the protection of our outward and homeward bound fleets. Let gentlemen separate these three circumstances, and they will act wisely; for the proper way to consider it is, not as an abstract, but a complex question, and since the consideration of every question must depend upon the circumstances which surround it, the inquiry will then be, whether or not the best measures, under all the circumstances, were adopted. In reply to this, I have no hesitation in saying, that government thought it the wisest plan to separate the fleets into different divisions. One fleet was stationed off Brest to watch the enemy, and intercept the sailing of the expedition; and another fleet was stationed at home to relieve the fleet off Brest, if necessary, or to pursue the enemy if it should sail. The fleet off Brest, under the command of admiral Thompson, was put under the command of admiral Colpoys on the 9th of October. Sir Edward Pellew was appointed to cruize off Brest. He was there the very day the armament sailed, and conveyed to admiral Colpoys' look out ship, the Marlborough, an account of their sailing. So it appears, that what ought to have been done was done. But notwithstanding the diligence, intelligence, and skill of admiral Colpoys, and of sir Edward Pellew, their exertions were in vain; for the state of the weather was such, that it was impossible for the admiral to keep his own fleet under his observation; and the air was so hazy, that the fog guns were continually fired. Could any man doubt of sir Edward Pellew's inclination to have given the intelligence to admiral Colpoys that the enemy had put to sea; or that admiral Colpoys was not desirous to see it? He could not be unwilling to receive it, because he had a fleet superior to the enemy under his command. If there was one drop of British blood in their veins; both sir Edward and the admiral must have been anxious to intercept the enemy. Yet with all the known ability and gallantry of both officers, it was the 24th of December before the news of the sailing of the enemy reached admiral Colpoys' squadron. So uncertain were both the officers alluded to with respect

to the actual views of the enemy, that they believed them to be destined for Portugal, and sir Edward Pellew sent off to admiral Vandeput at Lisbon, to give him notice thereof. But admiral Colpoys knowing for the first time, on the 24th of December, that the enemy had sailed on the 16th, and there having been a hurricane on the 17th, he believed the French ships might have been dispersed in the storm, and regulated his conduct accordingly. He thought it the wisest resolution not to follow them to Portugal or Ireland, because he was uncertain of their destination; and he therefore kept his station, on account of the chance of interrupting the return of all or part of the fleet in case of a dispersion by the storm. He recollected also, that the circumstance of the enemy's having sailed would be known by the admiralty, and that, by keeping his station, he should have the means of receiving such authentic intelligence as he could not otherwise expect to obtain.—With respect to the charge of the want of provisions, I am ready to admit that the squadron stationed off Brest was not relieved so soon as the admiralty had intended; and I will explain the reason. Sir Roger Curtis should have been in port at the beginning of November, but did not return till the 18th. He had been appointed to cruise off Rochfort, where he remained a fortnight longer than was at first thought necessary, to intercept the return of Richery's squadron from Newfoundland. Sir Roger's squadron, consisted of seven sail of the line, which, soon after their return to port, were to have been sent to the relief of the fleet off Brest; but the wind was so adverse as to render it impossible for them to come to Spithead before the 18th of November; and that was the real cause why the fleet off Brest was not relieved as soon as was intended. It is certain that admiral Colpoys did not return to port on account of an absolute want of provisions, but because he was not able to pursue the enemy from the uncertainty of their course, and because he was driven by violent gales up Channel—I now come to the interval between the arrival of admiral Colpoys, and the sailing of lord Bridport on the 31st of December. Sir Edward Pellew sent an account immediately of the sailing of the French fleet. This account reached the admiralty on the 20th of December. Previous to the receipt of this intelligence, on the 19th of December, lord Bridport hoisted his flag

on board his own ship to prepare for the relief of admiral Colpoys off Brest. Lord Bridport received information on the 21st of December from the Admiralty of the sailing of the French fleet from Brest, and immediately returned for answer, that all the fleet would be ready four days after, namely, on the 25th. [Here Mr. Dundas read the orders of the Admiralty, issued on the 21st, and another order issued after, counteracting some part of them, and desiring him to proceed off cape Clear immediately.] Lord Bridport having received these orders on the 25th, weighed anchor and went down Channel; but it so happened, from the eagerness of the crews, that an accident took place in getting out of port, and one or two of the ships ran foul of each other; by which means the Prince was damaged; and prevented from proceeding with the squadron; but the other ship gave signal that she was ready; and so there was no worse effect from this accident than the disabling one vessel. This happened on the 25th, and from that time subsequently to their sailing, there was not a fair wind. I have the authority of lord Bridport himself and six British officers struggling for glory, in addition to that of the port admiral, besides two commanders of frigates, that the wind would not suffer them to proceed down Channel. The impossibility, therefore, of the fleet's getting out to sea, is, I trust, put beyond any farther disputation. Now, if the case be as I have stated, it will bring the question within a short compass. It may possibly be agitated in another shape; and since it is evident that lord Bridport had reached St. Helen's with eight sail of the line, it may be asked why he waited for the other six, and why, under such circumstances, he did not immediately proceed with those eight? Let those who put such questions, recollect, that neither lord Bridport, nor the Admiralty, at that time, had the smallest intelligence of the enemy's being in Bantry Bay; nor had they any certain idea of their destination.—So far then, I have proved, that neither the Admiralty were remiss in giving proper orders, nor lord Bridport, or any other officers, in zeal and duty, to carry those orders into execution. Though the French fleet arrived off the coast of Ireland upon the 21st of December, no intelligence was received of them in this country till the 31st. The admiralty took the chance of sending to admiral Colpoys on the station where they expected to find

him, off the Lizard, in case of any adverse winds removing him from the French coast. Lord Bridport has hitherto been not only a gallant, but a fortunate admiral; yet it so happened, that although admiral Colpoys had been hovering with his squadron off Brest, to intercept the enemy upon their leaving that harbour; although lord Bridport afterwards proceeded off Cape Clear and the Irish coast to intercept them on their return; and although the Duke and the Majestic, with two other ships of war, were sent in search of them, they were so covered by the fog, as to escape them all. Still, however, they did not so escape as not to suffer for their temerity, for they lost in this rash expedition two ships of the line, four frigates, one corvette, and four transports, besides four or five hundred men.—I believe I have now answered most of the facts which the hon. gentleman has stated; and the result is, that no blame is imputable to the admiralty for the neglect of giving orders, nor any culpability to the conduct of the officers in the execution of them. There have been some disappointments in the failure I confess. The hon. gentleman said that Ireland was saved by the elements; but he should have remembered, that the same wind which dispersed the enemy, prevented our fleets from intercepting them. If ever any enterprise could prove the folly of invading Ireland, that must have done it; if ever any expedition could prove the necessity of being provided with a superior fleet than what they had for such an undertaking, that must have done it; and if ever there were a concurrence of miracles, it was surely at that period. If lord Bridport had met them, could any man entertain a doubt of their destruction? The hon. gentleman seems to think, that when a great hostile armament has invaded any country, the business is done. I must tell him, the difficulties are but just begun. An enemy requires a superior fleet on such occasions to cover their debarkation, which is always effected with panic and confusion, else they are likely to have their provisions cut off, and other necessities. So far, therefore, from laying aside confidence in our naval affairs, I wish to continue it; but not at the expense of a blind and indiscreet security. If there were one chance in a hundred, the enemy have had the benefit of that chance. I hope any man who hears me, or communicates with any person out of doors, will never again admit a spirit

of despondency. Let them lay aside all such childish dismay, which unnerves both the body and the soul, and annihilates the strength and energy of the country. Exclusive of our naval forces in the East and West Indies, the North seas and the Mediterranean, we have fifty sail of the line for the defence of Great Britain and Ireland, and upwards of 200,000 men under arms. Invasion, therefore, is nothing but a bugbear; yet I would not have men relax in their precautions on one hand, nor would I have them despond on the other. Thus far, I trust then, that the government and force of this country have been libelled and calumniated. I do not wish to prevent inquiry; but, upon a full consideration of the documents, I think the hon. gentleman will not find himself warranted to persist in his motion, because, I trust he is satisfied that no blame is imputable to the admiralty or officers. I shall therefore move the previous question, in order to move for the production of the papers relative to the transaction, that gentlemen may examine whether the aspersions be well founded. Mr. Dundas then moved the previous question.

Mr. Grey said, that the right hon. gentleman had concluded a very long speech with an apology for having taken up so much of the time of the House. The apology was necessary, for he had in the course of his speech dwelt on the unreasonableness of our being alarmed at the prospect of an invasion under all our present circumstances. This part of the speech of the right hon. gentleman could not, upon a superficial view of it, appear to be very closely connected with the question now before the House. Ministers had for a long time laboured to create an alarm in that House and in the country. They had so far succeeded, as to secure the confidence of a majority in parliament, who, upon all occasions during this war, had uniformly voted against any inquiry into their conduct; they had abused that confidence so much, and had brought the country into a state so deplorable, that even their friends and adherents began to shake off the delusion under which they had acted. Ministers therefore now began to be alarmed themselves; that was for their own safety: and therefore, to restore confidence to their adherents, they found it politic to do away the alarm which themselves had created. The right hon. gentleman ended his speech with saying, that the idea of an invasion

while we have a fleet so superior to that of the enemy, was a thing not within the compass of a credible belief. The right hon. gentleman had accused his opponents with having been inconsistent in their conduct, in now making so serious an object of an invasion, when it was well known, that while ministers called upon parliament to make provision against it, they treated it as a mere bugbear: indeed they were disposed to treat it as a bugbear, under the idea that our fleet was to be well managed; but when they saw it was scandalously mismanaged, the idea of an invasion became a very serious thing. Such was the case with the subject which was now before the House. It was under the idea that our fleets would be well managed that they had opposed the cavalry and supplementary-militia bills; they in that view thought them useless. He even still thought the cavalry bill something worse than useless, because it was the cause of a vast expense without the least possible utility. But to pursue the idea of the bugbear, of which the right hon. gentleman had said so much, he believed his hon. friends never applied that epithet to the idea of an invasion of Ireland, which was the place that had been attacked. In the country where an attack of the enemy was apprehended, and where it was made, there was neither a cavalry nor a supplemental-militia bill. The place against which no attack was apprehended was to be defended in an extraordinary manner; the place that was likely to be attacked was left entirely defenceless; and he would say, that the enemy not having obtained a footing in Ireland, was not owing to the wisdom of his majesty's councils, but to the interposition of Providence.—A great part of the right hon. gentleman's speech referred to the fleet under the command of sir John Jervis, but he must say, that notwithstanding the glorious event that had taken place under that illustrious admiral, yet ministers were highly to blame in leaving him with a force apparently so inferior to the enemy with whom he had to contend. In the brilliancy of that glorious victory, administration had no share, and he believed, that when the opinion of that gallant admiral was known, the public would be convinced that ministers had been negligent. He supported his assertion by a reference to the force that admiral had, the station he was in, and the facility with which he might have been re-

inforced. He then proceeded to take a view of the manner in which the Admiralty had neglected to equip lord Bridport's fleet for the coast of Ireland, at the time when the French came into Bantry Bay. He expected that those who defended lord Spencer would have laid all the documents relating to this transaction before the House; instead of which, the right hon. gentleman had produced those parts only which had been selected for the purpose of defending the admiralty, suppressing all those documents which would have put the case in its clear light; he had made a speech upon them, as if they contained all the documents which belonged to the subject, and then triumphantly called for the approbation of the House upon the conduct of the admiralty. In all this complication, he was entitled to say that, with respect to the affair at Bantry Bay, there was blame somewhere. He observed, that when any disgrace appeared to attach to ministers, it was uniformly contended that the winds were favourable to our enemies, and unfavourable to us. Were this defence set up but once, it might deserve some attention: but when a similar excuse was made in every attempt that failed, surely it argued, on the very face of it, remissness and neglect. The right hon. gentleman had produced a document to prove that admiral Colpoys' squadron was in no want of provision; and he particularly specified the *Powerful*, which could be in no want on its return to Cork, having been provisioned for six months. He had heard it reported that the fleet was in want of fuel; and he wished to know of one hon. admiral whom he saw in his place (lord H. Seymour), whether the ships might not be so reduced for want of water, as to be obliged to return on that account, though there might be no want of provisions. The right hon. secretary had stated, that on the 22d of December instructions had been sent to lord Bridport to put to sea immediately. Why did he not do so when the wind was fair; on the 22d, 23d, and 24th? It was no excuse to say, that his squadron was not ready, or that admiral Curtis had not returned from his cruise. He thought the admiralty ought to be impeached for not having a fleet ready to act on the 22d. Owing to the neglect of ministers, the enemy's fleet remained fourteen days off the coast of Ireland unmolested; and had they not met with bad weather, nothing would have prevented

them from striking a blow, and making themselves masters of Cork in two days after landing; and thus they might have destroyed twelve months provisions and stores for the navy. There was no adequate force in that part of Ireland to oppose the enemy. The right hon. gentleman seemed to think the French expedition a fortunate event, as it had proved the loyalty of that part of Ireland. Their loyalty was, indeed, meritorious, in proportion to the few obligations which the people of Ireland were under to their government. He condemned the restrictions of the Catholics, and insisted that nothing could add more to the discontents of Ireland, than the neglects which the people of that country, during different periods, had met with from administration.

Mr. *Windham* (secretary at war) began with stating, that general grounds of presumption of neglect were a sufficient cause for inquiry. The hon. gentleman was perfectly warranted in the motion he had made, and the country in wishing to receive satisfaction. Still, however, the grounds on which such an inquiry was to proceed ought to be substantiated. The hon. gentleman had acknowledged the propriety of the instructions given to admiral Colpoys, but he blames the conduct which the admiral pursued, when he heard that the French fleet sailed from Brest. This would go to blame the admiral; but he insisted, there was no blame at all. The object of the motion was not to criminate the admiral, and therefore he little doubted but that, if the gentlemen in opposition pursued the blame to that point, they would feel no desire to run their game any farther. Mr. *Windham* vindicated the conduct of the Admiralty, and showed how impossible it was to keep a fleet for any length of time in such a state of preparation as to be ready to sail at a moment's warning. When government knew nothing but that the French fleet was out with sixteen sail, it would have been extreme rashness to have sent lord Bridport out with a greatly inferior fleet, and till he had been joined at St. Helen's by the rest of his squadron. Even if the enemy had landed, he denied the probability of Cork falling into their hands. He paid a compliment to the inhabitants of the southern parts of that island, for the loyalty which they manifested on the approach of the enemy, and observed, it was singular enough that those very men who were supposed to be the most op-

pressed in that kingdom, had manifested that disposition, while the inhabitants of the North, who were said not to have the same reason for complaint, had manifested a disposition to insurrection. This, he thought, went a good way towards proving that it was possible for men sometimes to make groundless complaints against those by whom they were governed. He did not charge gentlemen in opposition with any evil intention when they talked of those parts of his majesty's dominions that were liable to attack; they, of course, meant no more, than to enforce the charges they were pleased to exhibit against administration; but they should recollect, that observations of that kind partook of the nature of a two-edged sword: they might happen to convey information to the enemy what place they might most successfully attack, as well as expose the negligence of ministers.

Mr. *Fox* said:—I shall begin, Sir, with the last part of the right hon. gentleman's speech who has just sat down—with that stale and profligate argument of his, always used against those who oppose the measures of administration; that when they charge ministers with neglecting the defence of the country, they are to be considered as holding out an invitation to the enemy to attempt an invasion. If that be true, we had better at once put an end to the forms, as we have done to the substance of the constitution. If that be true, we had better leave every thing to ministers, and instead of making members take the oath of transubstantiation, suffer no man to come into the House who will not previously declare that he will never say any thing against the conduct of the executive government. The right hon. gentleman has talked of "two-edged tools." In a state of war every complaint against administration must be in the nature of a two-edged tool. If I complain that one part of the country is weak, I may be told,—Take care; you are doing that which is dangerous; you are communicating to the enemy which is the least defensible point of the empire. To whom, then, am I to make the complaint? I wish to know whether ministers are the only persons to be permitted to give advice? Sir, I will state what my opinion has been with respect to an invasion; and will again say, that if ministers were really alarmed for the safety of Ireland, I cannot, upon any possible ground, account for their conduct. I will say farther, that if

they are apprehensive of any fresh danger to Ireland, their conduct is little less than insanity. Sir, I have dear connexions, whose property is not partly in this kingdom, and partly in that, but wholly in Ireland. When I speak, therefore, of Ireland, speak with some degree of feeling; and if what I hear be true, that country is at this moment more discontented than she was before the attempt at invasion. I suppose I shall be told, that I am holding out an invitation to the French. No, Sir, I am not inviting them. I am inviting ministers to take measures to remove that discontent, and remedy the grievances complained of. But we find that Ireland is divided into two parts—the contented and discontented. Upon that subject we shall hear more in future, but let not the right hon. gentleman who spoke last, state his opinion as our own. I have said, that the Catholics were in a state of unjust exclusion; but I never have said that the Protestants had no reason for complaint, or that they were not excluded from the essence and substance of the British constitution. I conceive all Ireland to be in such a situation, that if a speedy remedy is not applied, the minister will not do justice to the British empire. But the right hon. gentleman, if there is any logic in his statement, means to say, that it is a common way with us to exclaim, “Make the people happy, by taking away their grievances!” If he had said that we made use of an argument that was self-evident, and had complained of us on that account, it might have been well; but he says this, “May not men have unreasonable grounds of complaint?” To this I answer, Yes; but that is no reason for not removing their reasonable complaints. Does the secretary at war, then, mean to contend, that to relieve Ireland, the whole country should be put in a state of oppression? The North, he says, wants nothing, and is disloyal. The South wants every thing, and is still loyal. Here, I suppose, the gentleman means to put this paradox, and say, that we had better place all Ireland and England in the same state in which the Catholics in the South of Ireland are, and that then we may expect universal loyalty. I should have thought, that when the right hon. gentleman was attempting to prove that Ireland had no cause for complaint, he would have explained why proclamations were issuing daily for declaring parts of the kingdom out of the king’s peace. For my own

part, I firmly believe that the grievances of which Ireland complains, are real, deep, well-founded. But whether they are so or not, we hear that the people in the South are loyal; yet all the reward they get for their loyalty, is not a redress of grievances, not a removal of disabilities, not a cessation of exclusions. No, Sir, the reward they get is empty praise, a barren testimony to their loyalty; they have no more to expect than those in the North, who are represented to be of a very different description. I certainly do admire the loyalty that was shown by the people of Ireland upon the late invasion, and I should have thought that, by liberal and enlightened minds, that loyalty would have been deemed an unanswerable reason for giving the people, without delay, those privileges to which they are entitled. No such project, however, has been yet adopted, and that country remains in the same state in which it was at the recall of lord Fitzwilliam. He left them, after having had the authority of government for tantalizing their expectations, and the cup of happiness was on a sudden dashed from their lips. What may be the opinion of the right hon. gentleman I know not; but this I do know, that if there was no reason in the time of lord Fitzwilliam for removing the grievances complained of, the loyalty that has since been shown is hardly requited, if it is to be brought only as an argument to show that the people are not discontented. And upon the subject of grievances, what do the gentlemen of Ireland state? There are in that country men of as great respectability, and of as high abilities as any in this. Will the right hon. gentleman say, that those who supported lord Fitzwilliam are inclined to those Jacobinical principles with which we have so often been accused? Will he, because they did for a time give into the alarm that was raised to support the war, call them Jacobins? Look to these men! Look to the name of Grattan! of whom I never shall speak but with respect, and who, I am sure, will never err on the side on which we are said to err; look at these men, and then let the right hon. gentleman say, whether Ireland has no grievances. There is another point which the right hon. gentleman might have gone into, and I watched him narrowly, to see whether he would. It is this: he has denied, that if the enemy had landed at Bantry Bay, there was a probability of

Cork falling into their hands! Has he denied this? Let us institute an inquiry into the fact! He will not deny it. Will he say in excuse that it is impossible to guard every part of the empire? Shall we then forget, that on the 26th of October last, we were told of an invasion; and when we come to discuss the subject in March, we find that no part of the empire has been protected? And here I cannot help remarking upon what the right hon. gentleman, in hopes of undoing the alarm excited before Christmas, says to us, What, he asks, can you say, who always treated the idea of an invasion as a bugbear? Sir, I never did so treat the idea when applied to Ireland. But there is, in the argument of the secretary at war, a whimsical inconsistency. He is saying, "How can we be invaded with a superior fleet;" and this at a time when the subject of inquiry is, how the enemy came to invade us? For one, I think, that while we have a fleet which is not, as it has been in the late expedition of the French, mismanaged, that an invasion, with respect to Great Britain, is not an evil of the first magnitude. This, I dare say now, under the wing of the right hon. gentleman, though it will be remembered, that when I said so before, I was rebuked, as if I was a person not properly feeling for my country. I conceive, however, that an invasion would be an evil comparatively small, as long as we have a superior fleet. This leads me more particularly to the present argument. The right hon. gentleman says, that though there are many chances against an invasion while we have such a fleet, yet if there be only chance in favour of it, it is right to be upon our guard. Agreed. But there is no way in which we could have been so much harassed as by the mode that has been adopted. Let gentlemen apply the argument to the naval force, and see how far it will go. A fleet was kept off Brest, and it was probable that the French fleet might not escape; but ought we not to have had a second fleet at home to have intercepted the enemy in case they had made their escape? This is the important part of the discussion.—Mr. Fox took notice of all the facts of the case, and maintained, that it was the duty of that House not to take the words of one set of ministers in defence of another. He warned them of the probable effect of such a mode of defence. It might be injurious to the reputation of lord Spencer, as it had been to

that of his predecessor, lord Chatham. The former had a majority of the House in his favour, when an inquiry was moved for to examine into his conduct, and yet shortly afterwards he was compelled to give up his office of first lord of the Admiralty.

Mr. Sturt complained of the repeated insults offered to our coasts, which justified an inquiry. He asserted, that admiral Colpoys' ship came into port short of provisions, particularly of fuel. He was astonished at nothing that Mr. Dundas asserted; so great was his boldness, confidence, and assurance. His whole statement of the security of Ireland was a misstatement. He hoped, in God, he would not much longer have the direction of naval affairs. He might twist and toss his head about; but he hoped it would be soon twisted somewhere else.

Mr. Pitt considered the question to lay within a very narrow compass. A very clear and detailed statement had been given by his right hon. friend, which he had no doubt had made a very forcible impression on the House; he had also proposed to have a list of papers printed in support of that statement. If inquiry was the duty of parliament, it was true on the other hand, that details should be dispensed with that were useless, and might be mischievous. The general question was this, whether or not sufficient preparations were made by the Admiralty to be ready against any possible expedition which might be fitted out in the ports of France? It is admitted, that either Portugal or Ireland was the point of attack; the one was our faithful ally, the other was as dear to us as Great Britain itself. What was the nature of our preparation? Why, we had one fleet actually watching the enemy on their coasts, and ready to follow them wherever they might go, in case the weather had permitted that we could have known their direction; and we had another fleet in such a forward state of preparation, as to have been ready to have sailed in five days after we knew that the Brest fleet had sailed, had the wind been fair. Had either fleet been so fortunate as to have met the enemy, what prodigies of valour might we not have expected? In respect to the navy of Great Britain, it ought to be recollected how many and various objects, and what rich and important possessions, it had to protect. This circumstance must lessen our superiority in some points, especially when the

enemy had so lately been reinforced by the fleets of Spain. What more could be done than to have one fleet on the French coast, and another ready for sea? Having no positive information of the destination of the enemy's fleet, occasioned by the mere circumstance of fogs and tempestuous weather, was it extraordinary that we should have been so long in the dark, and unable to find out their place of rendezvous, when the French admiral and general Hoche, who were in possession of the secret, and sailed in the same expedition, as well as other captains of the fleet, had, from the same causes of weather, never been able to join it. Admiral Colpoys' fleet was in a condition to follow the enemy, and the papers offered to be produced would prove it. — Mr. Pitt concluded with complaining of Mr. Fox's violent and inflammatory language respecting the state of Ireland, and especially of the Catholics, who had had more indulgences granted them within the last few years, than they ever had had before.

The previous question being put, "That that question be now put;" the House divided:

	Tellers.			
YEAS	{	Mr. Whitbread	- -	} 62
	{	General Tarleton	- -	
NOES	{	Mr. Pybus	- - - -	} 209
	{	Mr. Canning	- - -	

So it passed in the negative.

Report from the Commons Committee of Secrecy on the Outstanding Demands on the Bank.] March 3. Mr. Bramston brought up the first Report of the committee appointed to inquire into the State of the Bank, which was read as follows:

"The Committee appointed to examine and state the total amount of Outstanding Demands on the Bank of England, and likewise of the Funds for discharging the same: and to report the result thereof to the House together with their opinion on the necessity of providing for the confirmation and continuance, for a time to be limited, of measures taken in pursuance of the minute of Council on the 26th of February last; and who are empowered to report their proceedings from time to time to the House; have, pursuant to the order of the House proceeded to examine into the several matters referred to their consideration, and have unanimously

agreed upon the following Report, viz.

"Your Committee have examined the total amount of out-standing demands on the Bank of England, and likewise of the funds for discharging the same; and think it their duty, without loss of time, to state those total amounts, and to report the result thereof to the House.

"Your Committee find upon such examination, that the total amount of out-standing demands on the Bank, on the 25th day of February last (to which day the accounts could be completely made up) was 13,770,390*l.*; and that the total amount of the funds for discharging those demands (not including the permanent debt due from government of 11,686,800*l.*, which bears an interest of three per cent.) was on the same 25th day of February last 17,597,280*l.*; and that the result is, that there was, on the 25th day of February last, a surplus of effects belonging to the Bank beyond the amount of their debts amounting to the sum of 3,826,890*l.* exclusive of the above-mentioned permanent debt of 11,686,800*l.* due from government.

"And your Committee farther represent, that since the 25th of February last considerable issues have been made by the Bank in bank notes, both upon government securities and in discounting bills the particulars of which could not immediately be made up: but as those issues appear to your Committee to have been made upon corresponding securities, taken with the usual care and attention, the actual balance in favour of the Bank did not appear to your Committee to have been thereby diminished."

March 7. Mr. Bramston reported from the Committee of Secrecy,

"That the Committee had farther examined the matters to them referred, and had directed him to report to the House, that, in their opinion, it is necessary to provide for the confirmation and continuance, for a time to be limited, of the measures taken in pursuance of the order of council on the 26th of February last; submitting to the wisdom of parliament to determine for what limited time it may be necessary that those measures should be continued."

Report from the Lords' Committee of Secrecy on the Outstanding Demands on the

Bank.] March 6. The Earl of Chatham presented the following

REPORT from the COMMITTEE of SECRECY, appointed by the House of Lords to examine and state the total amount of Outstanding Demands on the Bank of England, and likewise of the funds for discharging the same, and to report the result thereof to the House, together with their opinion on the necessity of providing for the confirmation and continuance of measures taken in pursuance of the minute of Council on the 26th of February last.

" Ordered to report,

" That the Committee having, in pursuance of the order of the House, proceeded to take into their consideration the several matters referred to them, have agreed to report thereon as follows:

" With respect to the first part of the order of the House, by which they are directed to examine and report the total amount of outstanding demands on the bank of England, and likewise of the funds for discharging the same, they called upon the governor of the Bank, and upon Mr. Bosanquet, one of the directors of the Bank (who attended them in the absence of the deputy governor), for an account to that effect; which account having by them, been produced to the committee, was verified by the deputy accountant of the Bank; and the same having been examined by the committee, it was agreed to report the result thereof to the House as follows:

" That the total amount of outstanding demands on the Bank, on the 25th day of February last, was 13,770,390*l.*: and that the total amount of the funds for discharging those demands, over and above the permanent debt due from government of 11,686,800*l.*, was, on the same day of February last, 17,597,280*l.*; and that the result is, that there was, on the 25th day of February last, a surplus of effects belonging to the Bank beyond the total of their debts, amounting to the sum of 3,826,890*l.* over and above the before-mentioned permanent debt of 11,686,800*l.* due from government.

" The Committee think it right to observe, that this account is made up to the 25th of February inclusive; and that since that day, several considerable issues have been made by the Bank in bank notes, both upon government securities, and in

discounting bills, the particulars of which could not immediately be made up; but that, as those issues were made upon corresponding securities, taken with the usual care and attention, the actual balance in favour of the Bank has not been materially varied, but, if at all, has been rather increased.

" In proceeding to the consideration of the second part of the order of reference, in which the committee are directed to report to the House their opinion on the necessity of providing for the confirmation and continuance of the measures taken in pursuance of the minute of council of the 26th of February, the committee have thought it right to confine their inquiries to those points only on which that necessity appeared to them principally to depend; and having examined to these points the governor of the Bank, and the said Mr. Bosanquet (one of the directors thereof), the committee find,

" That the Bank of England has lately experienced an unusual drain of cash.

" That this drain was owing in great part, to demands for cash, from the country: such demands being made upon the Bank, indirectly from the country, but directly from the bankers of London, who are to supply the country.

" That by the effect of this drain, the cash of the Bank has been of late very considerably reduced; that it has however, been known, by those conversant in the affairs of the Bank, to be a great deal lower; but that on this occasion the rapidity of the demands has been unparalleled.

" That those demands have been of late progressively increasing, but particularly in the last week; and that in the two last days of that week, the demands exceeded those of the four preceding days.

" That there was every reason to apprehend that these demands, and the consequent progressive reduction of cash would continue, and even increase.

" That by the effect of such reduction, if it were to continue in the same, or in a still farther increased proportion, the bank of England would be deprived of the means of supplying the cash which might be necessary for pressing exigencies of public service; and this led the Bank to make the communication they did to his majesty's ministers.

" And lastly, that since the date of the minute of council above mentioned, no

such alteration has occurred as materially to vary the situation of the Bank in this respect.

"On this view of the present state of the important question referred to them, the committee have agreed to report it to the House as their opinion, that it is necessary to continue and confirm the measures already taken, for such time, and under such limitations and restrictions, and with such power of discontinuing the same as to the wisdom of parliament may seem expedient."

Mr. Mainwaring's Bill for preventing the Forestalling &c. of Live Cattle.] March 6. Mr. Mainwaring said, that, in pursuance of the notice he had given, it now became his duty to state to the House some facts which he believed would call for a regulation in the management of the sale of live cattle, which was considered the principal cause of the high price of provisions. Late in the last session, a petition was presented to that House by a body of men calling themselves "Cutting Butchers," complaining of great hardships which they endured in consequence of the practice of engrossing, forestalling, and regrating live cattle, which, they said, were the principal cause of the high price of provisions. The House referred that subject to a committee. That committee sat for some time to examine into the allegations of the petition, and a number of witnesses were examined, after which the committee made a Report, and stated the substance of the evidence which was given to them together with some observations thereon. On account of the lateness of the session, no farther proceedings were had upon this subject. It appeared by that report, that there is a class of persons who are called jobbers, who make it a business to go about the country to the farmers, and to buy up immense quantities of large cattle, which are generally ready for the supply of the metropolis. When the jobber has got the cattle out of the hands of the grazier, they are jobbed again, and are sold from one to the other of these jobbers three or four times over before they fairly come to the London market, and thus these jobbers at last send them to the London market, with a fixed price upon them, contrary to the interest of the grazier, as well as the consumer; for the grazier sells them at the price which they will fetch of the jobber: but the jobbers by this practice get all the live cattle into

their hands, and they afterwards fix the price of the market upon these cattle; the consequence of which is, the jobbers have the whole control of the market in their own hands. By these practices enormous sums of money are made by these jobbers, insomuch that one of the witnesses examined before the committee, stated, that one of these jobbers cleared the sum of 2,000*l.* in 1795, for his share of jobbing in oxen. Enormous sums were made by the same practices by the jobbing in sheep. All that he had hitherto stated referred only to cattle fit for the London market: but this was not all, for these jobbers buy up the lean cattle all over the country, take them to graziers to be fed, and afterwards set their own price upon them, till they get at last the whole of the cattle of the country out of the hands of the farmers; and in the instances of the lean cattle, the jobbers get a double profit, for the cattle pass twice through their hands.—Another subject of grievous complaint was, that of regrating in the Smithfield market. A number of persons go to this market early, and buy up the cattle there, and merely lead them across the market, and then sell them singly to the butchers, by which, in the course of half an hour, they make enormous profits, and thereby enhance the price prodigiously. Another grievous subject of complaint was that of forestalling. This was the practice of what is called the carcass butcher. He goes ten or twenty miles into the country to meet the great dealers in cattle as they are coming to London, and sometimes buys up one half of the cattle intended for market; but they never come to market alive; they are sent to the private slaughter-houses of these carcass butchers; by this the Smithfield market often appears thin of live cattle, by which means again there is an apparent, though no real scarcity; the consequence of which is, the high price of butchers meat. These were inconveniences which required remedies. It was clear from this Report, that the metropolis might be well supplied but for the practices to which he had alluded; and that when the market appeared thin of cattle, that thinness has been owing to the artifices of these men. He believed, indeed, that sometimes cattle were sent to market much younger than they ought to be for sale there; but this was not the question now to be considered. The question now was, whether there were any practices

that necessarily enhance the price of provisions? And whether these practices were improper? If the House thought there were such practices, they ought to devise some means to stop them. Some legislative interference ought, in his opinion, to take place. He was aware that he might be told that he had stated only that there were engrossing, forestalling and regrating, and that there are laws in existence against such practices. He allowed that to be, in a great measure, true; but then the mode of carrying such laws into execution was attended with so much difficulty, delay, and perplexity, that no individual could be expected to enforce them. He knew the House would be cautious in coming to any measure that might seem to lay restrictions upon trade, and that all speculations in trade should be left to find their own level. He subscribed to that doctrine in a general way; but when men by artifices contrived to enhance the price of common food, he conceived it to be the duty of that House to adopt measures by which the price of such articles should be kept as low as possible; for if a man doomed to subsist by honest industry, could not support himself, he must either become a burthen upon the public, or he must starve; and while we wished to support our trade, we ought not to forget that these very labourers are the pillars on which the whole of our prosperity rests; that their labour is the foundation of our trade and commerce. It is therefore the interest, as well as the duty of parliament, to provide for labourers as well as they could.—He then moved, “That leave be given to bring in a bill for the more effectually preventing the Forestalling, Regrating, and Engrossing of Live Cattle.”

Alderman *Combe* conceived that some farther regulations were necessary, and, as far as he could judge, those regulations would not check any of the fair advantages of commerce.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

Debate in the Lords on appointing a Committee of Secrecy to inquire into the Causes of the Order of Council for the Stoppage of Cash Payments at the Bank.] March 6. The Duke of *Bedford* rose to move for a select committee to inquire into the causes which produced the Order of Council of the 26th of February last. His grace said, that from the time of issuing that fatal order to the present moment, he had given it the most attentive consideration,

and in every possible view of it, he saw it pregnant with the most pernicious consequences. This minute of council might have been necessary, and it might be necessary to continue it; but still the causes which produced it ought to be thoroughly investigated; for he was certain, if something effectual was not speedily done in the business, the continuance of the bank, in its present state, must prove the destruction of the country. The next point was with regard to the nature of the committee to which such inquiry should be submitted. He objected to a committee of the whole House, as being too inconvenient a mode to be adopted in a matter so important as this. He also thought a committee of secrecy by no means likely to be attended with those advantages which might be expected from a select committee. The necessity of inquiry was so evident, that he had not a doubt of the House agreeing with him, in whatever point of view they considered the subject. The noble duke then moved, “That a select committee of fifteen peers be appointed to inquire into the causes which produced the Order of Council of the 26th of February.”

Lord *Grenville* said, he did not rise for the purpose of opposing the general principle of inquiry recommended by the noble duke, but he differed from him in some of the conclusions he had drawn. He thought, that whatever might be the result of the inquiries of a committee, the opinion of the House must still remain the same with respect to the necessity for the order. He maintained, that the subject of the temporary difficulties which had made that order necessary, was wholly unconnected with the subject of finance. There might be in the affairs of any banking company temporary embarrassments, with regard to the immediate want of circulating medium, without such derangement in the least operating to the disparagement of the general wealth of the company. Wealth did not consist in the quantity of the circulating medium only: it was well known that there were many branches of commerce which required a much larger quantity of circulating medium to carry them on than others. He did not differ as to the propriety of the inquiry, but if it was to be gone into, he should move, that the word “secret” be substituted for the word “select.”

The Duke of *Norfolk* had no objection to a secret committee if it was openly

appointed; but he objected to the mode of choosing a committee by ballot, because it was well known that such committees were composed of the minister's friends. In the last committee, there were no fewer than three cabinet ministers, who were the very persons who signed the order of council in question, and two of whom were near relations of the minister. When inquiries were conducted in such a way it was impossible the country could be satisfied.

A Secret Committee was then agreed to. Lord Grenville next moved, That the Committee be chosen by ballot.

The Duke of Bedford said, that with respect to a ballot, whatever it might have been in the days of our ancestors, nothing could be more evident, than that, as at present practised, it was a mode by which it was in the power of ministers to nominate whoever they pleased. It was notorious that the last committee was composed of those very persons whose conduct was implicated in the inquiry. Probably if the inquiry had been impartially entered upon, circumstances might have come to light, by which it would have appeared that the conduct of administration in issuing the order of council was ill advised; or, at least, if the exigency of the moment required it, that they had reduced themselves to that necessity, by their previous misconduct. But how could it be expected that any thing of the kind could come to the knowledge of their lordships, if the committee was to be composed of the very men whose mal-administration was the subject of inquiry? He was therefore of opinion, that the committee should be openly nominated, and concluded by making a motion to that effect.

Lord Grenville said, that the committee to be ballotted for was not to inquire into the conduct of ministers, but into the situation of the Bank of England. Ever since that House had been a chamber of parliament, he did not believe that there had been a committee of fifteen for a similar purpose, chosen by nomination from different parts of the House. Such a scheme presented great confusion. On an event like the present they must be madmen who would insist that the committee ought to consist of fifteen persons avowedly adverse to government. Indeed, he believed, there would be some difficulty in finding fifteen of that description within those walls.

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The House divided: for the appointment of the committee by ballot, 47; against it, 8.

Debate in the Commons on the Bank Restriction Bill.] March 9. Previously to the order of the day being read, for taking the Reports of the Secret Committee into consideration,

Mr. Sheridan begged leave to offer a few observations upon the said reports. The first measure which he thought necessary was, to endeavour to prevent the impressions which the reports might have upon the public opinion respecting the situation of the Bank, because, according to those reports, the government was debtor to the Bank in various sums, independent of eleven millions, which the committee reckoned as forming so much of the capital stock of the Bank, when in fact that eleven millions was no debt at all. Instead of being included in the capital stock of the Bank as a debt, it should have been reckoned what it really is, as an annuity of 330,000*l.* per annum, that sum being the stipulated interest for the other, during a certain term of years. If the eleven million actually belonged to the effects of the Bank, and was available at any time, that sum might be made applicable in any exigency, to any demand which might occur; but that could not be called a debt where there were no means of claiming the sum so reckoned. Government might pay off that sum if it were so inclined; but it was improbable it would do so, nor was it at present very probable that government would pay it off in 1814, that being the expiration of the 18 years for which it was obtained, when it could retain the use of it, for so small an interest as 3 per cent. There was no power in the Bank to compel the payment of this money at any period, and the payment of it rested solely on the option of government. The Bank, as a corporation, was merely a vehicle for managing the national debt, and so long as that debt existed, the Bank would exist also. It would be a corporation to the end of time, if the national debt, remained unpaid. So far, then, it was evident, that the eleven millions did not form a part of the capital stock of the Bank; and this was an instance, he would not say of the inaccuracy or design to misrepresent to the committee, but of a statement, in consequence of which a sort of impression had gone abroad, as if that money were

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immediately applicable to any object of relief. The inquiry then would be, of what effects the seventeen millions are composed which are to defray the outstanding engagements of the Bank. They consist of course, of cash in hand, of other disposeable securities, and of bills which the Bank has discounted. It appeared by the paper on the table, that government, owed 9,964,413*l.* to the Bank which remained as part of their assets, and the permanent securities towards defraying the 13,770,000*l.* of outstanding demands upon it. Now, what had been the conduct of government in this affair, but the most extraordinary that ever occurred? Let any gentleman take a supposeable case of individuals acting in the same way, and see how it would stand. If a merchant, for instance, had assets in bonds, merchandize, discounts, and other disposeable commodities, to the value of 17,000*l.* out of which he owed to various creditors 13,000*l.*, but had on the *per contra* side of his account 10,000*l.* due to him by one man, which was within 3,000*l.* of the extent of his engagements, would not that merchant think it very extraordinary conduct in that man, if he should say, "Sir, I understand that your affairs are in a ticklish way, let me make an inquiry into them, and if upon a strict examination, I discover, that you have wherewithal in due time to extricate yourself from your difficulties, and discharge your debts, I will not say that I may not guarantee them for you." Yet, however absurd and extraordinary such a mode of proceeding might appear, such had actually been the mode of proceeding between the government and the Bank. To go back to the comparison; the gentleman would say, "Why do you not pay me the money you owe me before you make such a request, and then I may be able to satisfy every demand without your interference." Such should have been the conduct of the directors upon the present occasion. He would not say that the government had been highly criminal, and that the directors had committed great errors. He might be blamed at such a crisis for speaking so plainly; but plain dealing was now the only method to recover public credit. The next inquiry was, whether the Bank had declined all at once, or suffered a gradual decrease; and if the latter were the case, how happened it that the fatal effects which ensued were not foreseen, nor measures taken to prevent

them? About four years ago the Bank increased their dividends to 7 per cent., which indicated a growing prosperity; and, granting that to be the case, could they have declined all at once? Was the House and the public to imagine, when the Bank undertook to subscribe one million last year towards the loyalty loan of 18 millions, that they were then suffering a gradual decrease? Because if they were, how happened it that government did not take any one measure to pay the debt which it owed to the Bank, to prevent the inconveniencies which it has lately been subjected to, but on the contrary took an additional sum of one million? It appeared as if it had been the plan of government to reduce the Bank to such a situation; and nothing short of infatuation on the part of the Bank could have induced the directors to submit to it. What then, it may be said, ought not the directors of the Bank to lend assistance to government or to individuals, in cases of temporary difficulty and on permanent securities? Undoubtedly, if they can do so they ought; but let them first recollect that they are not the trustees of the public, nor of government funds, but the trustees of Bank proprietors, of widows and of orphans; who, if they went blindly on in lending unlimited assistance must eventually be ruined. Here then it might be asked, what measures did government pursue, to enable the Bank to pay its outstanding engagements? It would naturally be supposed that something was done, besides the prohibition of paying in specie. It does not appear, however, that any thing was done to avoid the measures which government adopted. Had the Bank not the means to do it then? Certainly they had; for their sufficiency has been declared. Did the Bank call in any of the debts which were due to them? Did it narrow its discounts? Did it dispose of any of its disposeable effects? One of these, if not all, would have been the plan of a merchant to retrieve himself in a similar situation; and yet not one of these measures did the Bank adopt. Upon these grounds, he would to-morrow move, that immediate steps be taken to pay the money advanced by the directors of the Bank to government.

The order of the day for taking the Reports of the Secret Committee [see p. 26] into consideration, and the said Reports being read, Mr. Fox, on account

of the convenience of speaking more than once, moved, That the House should resolve itself into a committee to consider of the said Reports. The motion was agreed to. The Speaker left the chair, and Mr. Douglas having taken the chair of the Committee,

Mr. Pitt said, that the facts contained in the report were to be considered in a twofold point of view; first, as relating to the general state of the funds of the bank, and the propriety of the order in council; second, with regard to the necessity of confirming and continuing that order. With respect to the first, such had been the universal impression made by the statement in the report of the funds of the bank, that there did not exist a question of their sufficiency and solidity. He believed the general impression was such, that not a doubt was entertained with regard to the ultimate security of the bank; and until that day, in the speech of an hon. gentleman, he had never heard any thing stated, that in the smallest degree questioned the truth of the statement contained in the report. There had been some observations made by the same hon. gentleman, to which he should think it necessary to advert. It had been stated, that the money due from the public to the Bank of England was not to be considered in the same point of view as the capital of any other company embarked in trade. In answer to that he would observe, that the security of a certain number of traders, whether a corporation or not, consisted not only of the original sum embarked, but also of whatever profit had been produced in the course of time; and to deny that such original property embarked, if still unimpaired, whether it was secured as part of their outstanding debt or not, was not part of their capital, was to deny every principle on which every mercantile account was ever constructed.—He had thought it necessary to make that consideration a part of the question upon this occasion. This was a question which had for its object the ultimate security of the funds of the bank, and not whether the demands against it were to be paid at a particular day or hour. It was a question with reference to the solvency and solid capital of the bank. It was not a question, whether the bank contained actual specie equal to those demands; but whether they had good debts due to them, or property of any other description, which might be finally available to them in the liquidation of the debts

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owing to the public. Such was the true description of the question, and in that view alone ought it to be considered: whereas, the question had been considered, not with respect to the means of the bank, and the manner in which the bank was to answer to their creditors; but how far it had or had not carried on an advantageous trade. The House had nothing to do with the question of the internal economy of the bank: that had always been left to their own decision; but it did, in point of fact, appear upon the report, that the bank was possessed of substance far exceeding the demands of the public, and that the individuals composing the corporation would have a far greater sum to divide, if such a division of property was to take place, than they had originally embarked; and therefore, with regard to the question of ultimate security, there was not the least doubt upon that head, because of the necessity of preventing the payment in specie for a limited time.—It had been stated, that the debt due from government to the bank, was a debt not demandable till a given day, and only bearing an interest of 3 per cent. Still, however, their inability to obtain that debt from government was no proof that they could not conduct their affairs independent of it; for, supposing the bank was in such a situation, that they could not carry on business, the public would not suffer them to continue any longer in possession of that monopoly which gave them the privilege of conducting the public pecuniary concerns; but it was clear that the monopoly could not be withdrawn, without the public becoming collectively responsible to each individual; therefore, the debt of eleven millions to the public, equal to which the government was indebted to the bank, would put the public exactly in the same situation in the event of the insolvency of the bank, as if it had been paid to them; but, added to that, the public had for the payment of the debts due from the bank, the parliamentary faith of the kingdom, and the security of the whole property of the country. It therefore, seemed, that, if the object was only to consider the ultimate solidity of the bank, the committee could not have done their duty, if they had not included this debt with every other debt due to the bank, and particularly considering it as one which stood on the best security the great power of the community could give. It was not his intention to make any proposal

to the House on this part of the subject ; but he conceived, that the inquiry into the ultimate security of the bank being the point referred to the committee, in consequence of the temporary suspension of payments in cash, ought alone to be the question agitated in the House ; and he trusted that the measure which had been adopted of suspending such payments, would be considered as one which made the ultimate responsibility of the bank secure, and that on that account, the House would agree in the propriety of continuing the restriction.—A great deal had been said with respect to the propriety of examining the causes which had led to the order of council. It certainly appeared a matter of difficulty, to distinguish the boundaries between the necessity, and the causes which produced it ; for if a cause could be shown for a necessity, it would go far towards removing the necessity, by pointing out the means of obviating the cause. Such was a fair mode of reasoning ; but it also seemed plain, that there was a difference between a particular necessity for a measure, and the particular measure for continuing it. He understood there was not a difference of opinion, with respect to the propriety of every thing being examined, that could show the necessity of the measure which had been adopted on the 26th of February. The committee had only reported with respect to the actual existence of a necessity of continuing the measure, they had not reported on the necessity of taking the measure ; they had not reported on the cause. On the necessity of continuing the restriction for a limited time, they had reported a clear opinion that in their judgments it did appear indispensably necessary to continue it. He knew that many who might consider that there existed a necessity of continuing the measure, were not equally well satisfied with regard to the cause. He certainly did not mean that the report of the committee was to be considered as any sanction of the original measure : he only contended, with respect to the necessity of continuing it for the present, that it was impossible for any one to read the report, without being sensible of it, and without feeling at the same time, that all the members who composed the committee were impressed with the necessity of continuing the restriction.—He should therefore feel it his duty to propose the continuance of the measure. What might be the time proper to extend the restric-

tion to would be best considered in the future progress of the bill. The order of council had been issued by government on the ground of the necessity, and was admitted not to have been legal, unless made so by the House ; therefore, as the House had given their sanction to government for issuing the order, he had no doubt but they would see the necessity of indemnifying government for what had been done.—He should propose, to the House to refer the inquiry into the cause which had produced the necessity, to the same committee as had before been appointed. It was his intention to refer to the committee, powers to enable them to enter into the examination and discussion of every circumstance, which they might have the least reason to suppose had in any respect, deranged the ordinary channel through which the finances and resources of the country flowed, and to ascertain, not merely what related to the bank, but what was the real and undisguised situation of the country. He had the satisfaction to declare, that, whatever were the inconveniences which existed in the country at this period, whatever temporary difficulties might press upon the people, whatever was the extent of our present burthens, or how far it might be still necessary to increase them, the fundamental and radical resources of the country were great and flattering.—He then moved, “ That leave be given to bring in a bill for confirming and continuing, for a time to be limited, the restriction, contained in the minute of council of the 26th of February last, on payments of cash by the Bank.”

Mr. *Fox* said:—Before I proceed to consider the different points which the right hon. gentleman proposes to submit to the House, I must beg leave to say a few words with regard to the first report of the secret committee. I think the committee did what was fair in stating to the House the sum of eleven millions due to the Bank by government, because in the manner in which it was stated there could be no intention to deceive. I nevertheless think that my hon. friend was perfectly correct in the observations he made. For is there any man so ill-informed, as to consider that sum as assets which, in case of necessity, the Bank could employ ? It is in fact an annuity of 330,000*l.*, which government may or may not, as it thinks proper, redeem. But, says the right hon. gentleman, if the

Bank should cease to answer the purposes for which it was intended and terminate its operations, you can withdraw the monopoly which you have allowed it. Without supposing a case of total annihilation, may not the Bank be placed in a situation in which it is desirous to redeem its debts, and to avail itself of all its means? In this case, you must consider to what extent this sum could be available.—The right hon. gentleman says, that the first report has confirmed the opinion which was previously entertained of the complete solvency of the Bank. Upon this point, my sentiments are precisely the same as they were before. Yet I must consider the report as productive of, at least, one very useful consequence, if it has induced the right hon. gentleman to abandon the intention which he announced of guaranteeing the notes of the Bank with the sanction of government. From the fullest reflection I am convinced, that the more you identify the Bank with the government, the more you make it dependant upon the measures of administration, the more you cement a union, calculated not for permanent good, but for temporary expedient: you increase the source from which our misfortunes have sprung, and add a great calamity to those with which the country is already oppressed.—With regard to the second report of the committee, the right hon. gentleman laments that the report is so limited. Upon a former discussion I stated that the words of the reference to the committee did limit their inquiries; an opinion which the committee, by their report, have proved to have been well-founded. The right hon. gentleman says, that they ought to have gone into the necessity which produced the order of council. To have enabled the committee to enter properly into the inquiry, the order under which they were to act should have been large and comprehensive. But it appears to me that they have reported nothing that is not self-evident. There is no subtle, metaphysical distinction necessary to demonstrate that there exists a great difference between the necessity of at first resorting to the measure, and the necessity of continuing it. I have no hesitation in saying, that the very issuing and acting upon such a measure creates the necessity of its continuance. Whatever may be thought of the embarrassments which previously existed, there can be no difference of opinion as to the run which would en-

sue, and the drain which would be experienced, on the order being abruptly taken off. But although I thus recognize the necessity of continuing the order for some time, it does not follow that we should be insensible to the importance of my hon. friend's observations. I confess I am not so sanguine of the effects of the measure he proposes, as to imagine that it will supersede the necessity of continuing the order of council; but I am convinced it will tend to limit its duration. The right hon. gentleman says, that my hon. friend's proposal requires time, in order to produce any good effect. Admitted. And this is the very reason why it ought to be adopted. But, there is another reason why we ought to embrace it. If we are compelled by dire necessity to continue so fatal a measure, we ought to accompany it with substantial proofs, that we are taking measures to remove the necessity, and limit its duration.—But the right hon. gentleman says, that as the payment which government would make the Bank must be in paper, it could not have the effect of enabling the Bank to make their payments in cash. I beg leave to refer to what the right hon. gentleman said on a former occasion, that the advances by the Bank to government were in paper. But does it not occur to every gentleman, that there is a great difference between paper equivalent to cash, and paper for which cash cannot be obtained? For instance, when the Bank advanced five millions of paper convertible into cash, that paper issued by government for various services became so much additional paper, for which the Bank was liable to be called upon for cash. The case now is far different. It certainly is less relief to the Bank to pay in paper than to pay in specie: you do not in the one case positively add to the quantity of specie which the Bank possesses, but you may diminish the amount of the paper for which they are liable, and so increase their ability to meet what remains. If you pay in paper, you at least diminish the disproportion between cash and paper; which certainly adds greatly to the present embarrassment. In the view of the case which the right hon. gentleman holds out, the difficulties which the country experiences are owing to the want of a circulating medium: government preventing the Bank from increasing the circulating medium, is, in their own view of the subject, an evil to

be removed. I have no hesitation in saying, however, that the most desirable mode of remedying the embarrassment which the Bank experiences, would be by an increase of cash; but if the disproportion between specie and paper produced that state of things which terminated in a public act of bankruptcy and a notorious breach of faith, I consider a diminution of the quantity by a payment in paper would contribute to lessen the evil under which we now labour.—With regard to the functions of the Bank, I disagree entirely from the right hon. gentleman. The Bank directors should do nothing inconsistent with the interest of the proprietors for whom they act. When they consider the public interest, instead of that of the proprietors, they depart from their proper sphere, and the effect of their conduct is to sacrifice their private interest to the public good. Let the functions of the Bank and of parliament be kept distinct, and they are both exercised to the public advantage. Let the directors pursue their private interests, and attend to their own concerns: let parliament and ministers devote their attention to public measures: this is an arrangement which suits better with their respective objects, and conduces best to their common ends, instead of that union of duties in which every thing is confounded, and that distraction of pursuits in which every thing is destroyed.—That a diminution of discount and of the issue of paper ought to take place, I have no difficulty in saying. That this would be attended with inconvenience cannot be doubted. But, on the other hand, this inconvenience ought to be compared with those real evils which it would tend to remove. The advantages and disadvantages ought to be balanced. The House should determine whether any of the consequences which it would involve are equal to the mischiefs which our present state presents. In reality, the Bank ought to be viewed as unconnected with government. That they ought to regard the public interest is certainly true; but this object they are most likely to attain by a wise prosecution of their own. I know nothing in the charter of the Bank that binds them to discount to any particular extent, or to discount at all. I find, however, from the experience of one hundred happy years, that they have gone on in supplying this accommodation with advantage to themselves and to the public. The Bank,

however, must have been aware of the situation in which they were placed; they must have been sensible that the drain of cash they experienced would reduce them to a state when they could no longer pay in specie. They do not seem upon this prospect to have acted with prudence and discretion. They ought to have adopted measures to increase their cash, and to diminish the paper which caused the demand. They ought to have done what, in similar circumstances, a prudent individual would have done. They ought to have narrowed their circumstances for a time, to gain that credit which would afterwards have enabled them to have pursued their operations with increased prosperity and success. The conduct which the minister thought proper to prescribe, however, was directly the reverse. He boldly resolved to defraud the public creditor, to violate the faith of all engagements, rather than that the Bank should narrow their discounts, or discontinue their advances to government. I would ask, How are you to increase the quantity of cash in proportion to the increased circulation of paper? To increase its quantity is not in your power: but do at least what you can; avail yourselves of the remedy you possess; diminish the quantity of paper, and reduce that disproportion which exists between paper and specie. This, at least, is in your power; and, to a certain extent, its good effects will be felt. Does the right hon. gentleman think that, by giving a forced circulation to paper, he will be able to draw cash from the lurking places to which it may have retired, or turn the course of foreign exchange so much in our favour as to remove the difficulties under which we labour? It may be said that, in this manner, you strike at commerce, you suspend industry, and strike at the sources of revenue. There are certainly many nice considerations upon this subject, which are not to be lightly treated. It is one of the accumulated evils of our situation, that it is impossible to embrace any remedy which applies to the evil which affects the country upon the one hand, without committing some injury to it upon the other. He who talks of plans, of positive plans to go at once to the disease, who hopes to produce great good without hazarding a mixture of evil, is not the person from whom, in a situation like the present, much advantage is to be expected. Such plans are

those of the visionary projector, who arranges his plan without considering the circumstances in which it is to operate. All that is left is a choice of evils. He that talks rationally will rejoice if he can discover a remedy that with some evil will be able to overcome the mortality of the disease. Here, as in every other instance, the dictates of wisdom do not clash with the precepts of morality. No concealment should be attempted in the affairs of the Bank. The Bank should have but one object, that of performing their engagements and discharging their debts. We have heard of the phrase "perish commerce, let the constitution live." The exclamation of the Bank should be "perish commerce, provided we pay our debts," and if any temporary inconvenience should be felt, their unsullied integrity and unimpeached credit would be the pledge of its ample restoration and increased prosperity. If, by the narrowing of discounts, commerce should sink under temporary difficulties, it would revive vigorous and powerful from that credit which had fallen to support it. Such a decisive measure would, in every view of policy, be more favourable to commerce and to prosperity, than a sickly existence and lingering expedients. By acting upon these plain and natural principles, some good may be obtained. Any thing else will prove false and delusory. The Bank ought to act for the advantage of their constituents, and in doing so they will best promote the benefit of the public. Any other miserable expedients will only increase the evil which they are intended to remove. Suppose, for instance, that government were to pay five or six millions to the Bank in paper, which the Bank was to destroy, and that, though it produced a temporary stagnation, it restored the solvency of the Bank, and enabled them to make their payments in cash. By this means credit (if credit can at all be revived after it has received so fatal a shock), being revived and confidence restored, I would ask, if the revival of commerce would not immediately follow? I would ask, too, if credit be destroyed, is its return equally certain; would its revival be equally soon? This is the measure of prudence, and, in the view of policy, that which it would be wise to adopt. But when you consider, that along with this you fulfil your engagements to the public creditor, that the Bank is put in a situation to discharge its

notes in cash, can you hesitate to embrace an alternative by which you can preserve your honour, and pursue your interest? Expedients will turn out as expedients usually do. A projector is never tired by disappointment. If the right hon. gentleman, however, recollects the many expedients which he has already employed, some of them calculated perhaps to produce a little good; if he reflects upon the different schemes which he has attempted in the last fourteen months; he will be convinced how unavailing are projects opposed to the natural stream of things; how futile it is, by such paltry resources, to supply an expenditure, monstrous and extravagant; he will be tired of the repetition of such delusions, and disgusted with the prospect of fresh disappointments. But the right hon. gentleman, I am afraid, is not to be deterred by experience. Two months hence we shall be discussing some new expedient of the right hon. gentleman, till at length the beginning of bankruptcy, which we have already witnessed, proceeding from one progress to another, terminates in complete insolvency. I do not say that the right hon. gentleman's expedients were all bad, but they were not sufficient to remedy the evil. Trusting to inefficient expedients, we at length find ourselves in the gulph in which we are plunged. It is time therefore to recur to fundamental principles, and to act upon them strictly. Without this there is no hope of redeeming the country, no chance of escaping the ruin by which we are threatened. With regard to the ideas which the right hon. gentleman threw out, so far as they go, they have my approbation. The first of the proposals which he makes is, to take a complete view of our financial situation. A motion for an inquiry of this nature was made two years ago,* when the country might have been saved, the embarrassments that have been experienced might have been prevented, and the necessity of the order of council avoided. Last year, too, had the motion of my hon. friend (Mr. Grey) to that effect† been listened to, we should not now have been discussing how the public creditor was to be paid. But the House goes on confiding till an act of bankruptcy is passed, and then they think of inquiring. It is

* See Vol. 31, p. 1345.

† See Vol. 32, p. 902.

the fate of all the right hon. gentleman's projects to come too late. The proposals of peace which he made in December last, would have been accepted in 1794, or in the beginning of 1796. But when the moment at which they would have been received has passed away, he makes proposals, which if made at the proper time, would have saved the country. How long is this system to be allowed to go on? How long are we doomed to sustain this destructive war? Let the right hon. gentleman look back, and he will see the repeated instances in which the interests of the country have been sacrificed by his tardy wisdom. Perhaps now he may be prepared to offer terms of peace, which a few months ago would have been accepted with eagerness. At length, after having so obstinately resisted it, he comes forward and tells us, that it is proper to inquire. Late, however, as this inquiry is to be granted, it will be attended with one good effect. It will, I hope, lead to a declaration, that the calamities in which we are involved have been brought upon us, to say no more, by the errors of ministers, and by the confidence of the last parliament. It will demonstrate that the country has been led to the brink of destruction by parliament relinquishing the principle of the constitution, and the practice of our ancestors. The House trusted when it ought to have inquired, and we are now told that we are to inquire, when it is doubtful whether inquiry can save us, and when the punishment of the delinquent is the only consolation that remains. Of late it has been too much the practice to give up the privileges which the constitution secures; it has been too much the fashion to wish to change a free government into an absolute monarchy. For my own part, no exigency shall prevail upon me to consent to increase the power of the crown. It is still my opinion, that the measure which the counsel adopted, if necessary, should have originated in this House. The real cause of all our calamities has been, that, whether by its own power, or the connivance of parliament, the crown has swallowed up the whole government. If this inquiry had been sooner undertaken, there was a chance for salvation. Is there a man who thinks that, after this House felt and acknowledged that peace with France had become practicable, if gentlemen had fairly told what they thought, and acted from their conviction, peace might not

have been obtained? But servility, base servility, has been the ruin of this country. There must now be a total change of measures, a radical change of system.—The great object which we ought to pursue is to abridge, as much as possible, the duration of the measure which has become necessary. I hope it will be short, but I hope too, that no power will be given to the crown to suspend its force. Parliament ought to sit expressly for this bill, and though it were to sit for five years together, the minister who should advise his majesty to prorogue it before this measure is disposed of, would deserve to be impeached. The measure which it has now become necessary to sanction is attended with many aggravating circumstances. Among the dividends already due there are many which have not actually been received. Suppose that a dividend had become due on the 5th of January, and that the person having no immediate use for the money, allows it to remain in the Bank, relying on the faith of government that it is actually paid. Government, however, like lady Townley in the play, cries, "Stop, don't pay that money, I have other purposes to serve with it," and because it has the key of the chest where it is deposited, in violation of all faith and honour, seizes on the cash which had in reality been paid, and gives something else for which specie cannot be obtained. If such be the necessity, surely any situation is preferable to this. Whatever may be the temporary consequences to individual traders, or to general commerce, can they be put in the balance with avowed bankruptcy, with flagrant breach of faith and undisguised robbery? As a confirmation of the order of council has become necessary, I shall not negative the measure proposed. With respect to the inquiry, I think that the mode by secret committee ought not to be adopted. But I shall take the sense of the House upon the point, whether the former committee shall be revived. I shall not repeat the arguments used formerly against a committee by ballot, they apply in all their force to the present case. After all that has been said of the dignity of the House, and the cant of minorities, I am warranted by history and experience in saying, that a committee by ballot is always nominated by the minister, and I think the House ought to perceive that this is not a moment for such practices.

Lord *Hawkesbury* could not forbear

expressing his surprise at the language that had fallen from the right hon. gentleman. He had asserted, that the country was in a state of bankruptcy; but, in no point of view, was the term applicable to the present condition of the country. A mere stoppage of payment could not be considered with justice as an act of bankruptcy, when it is proved beyond a doubt, that there are substantial funds far exceeding what was necessary to answer every just demand. The embarrassments were principally imputed to the scarcity of specie. But did it therefore follow that the Bank was poor? Undoubtedly not. Money was only the representative of wealth. It not unfrequently happened that this scarcity of specie was most experienced, when solid wealth was considerably increased. Our present circumstances, instead of depressing us, should invigorate our hopes. We have no reason to despair, but on the contrary, every reason to be satisfied. For if we examine into the causes that may be supposed to produce temporary difficulties, similar to those in which we are now involved, it will be difficult to trace our embarrassments to any of them. If we look to our internal, or our foreign trade, it was scarcely ever more flourishing. Indeed, there is no criterion to which we can resort, but what abundantly proves the sufficiency of our funds and the solidity of our resources. If we look to the price of land, we find it higher than at any period of any former war. What may have occasioned the present want of specie, it was not his intention elaborately to inquire. In the first place, it might be attributed to the extent of our paper currency, and to the enormous quantity of imaginary capital now floating in the country. But did this rationally account for it? Surely not. For the industry of the country was not set at work by specie, but by the credit of the individual, whether banker or manufacturer, who held out employment and encouragement to industrious hands. It might with more reason be ascribed to the enormous increase of our trade and commerce. The sudden disappearance of specie might also be imputed to the dread of an invasion, or to any other panic that may have seized on the public mind. The right hon. gentleman asserted, that it was the interest of the public that our paper currency should be diminished. To support this assertion, he instituted a comparison between a private trader and the Bank of

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England; but in no one point of view could they be fairly compared. The Bank of England should be regarded as the centre of all our commerce. Should any thing affect this spring and sinew of our commercial energies, they must be proportionally impaired. Nay, the arguments of the right hon. gentleman tended directly to affect what he seemed so anxious to preserve. By diminishing the revenue, you surely cannot increase public credit: by cramping the circulation of paper currency, you contract the sphere of our commercial pursuits; and by this affect the public at large. It might be prudent to extend the operation of sir George Savile's law, and thus secure a larger quantity of specie in the country. But even if this were effected, it would not follow that our paper circulation should be diminished. Such a diminution would prove far more prejudicial to the public creditor and to public credit, than any of the cases so strongly urged by the right hon. gentleman.

The *Solicitor General* agreed with the noble lord, that specie was not the only indication of the wealth of a state or of an individual; there might be many cases in which it would be manifest, on the examination of his affairs, that an individual was extremely rich, although, at the time of that examination, that individual was not in the actual possession of a single shilling. From the manner in which commerce was now carried on, it was impossible that specie should be the only representative of wealth or property. If every man was to make a demand upon his debtor of payment in specie of what was due to him, few individuals in this commercial country would be able to discharge their debts. That was the case with the Bank at the present moment; but it was unfair to call the stoppage of payment in specie a bankruptcy. The Bank was solvent, and even very rich, although they were at this moment unable to pay all demands upon them in cash. He apprehended also, that this non-payment of bank-notes with cash could not be called a fraud, because the public knew perfectly well, that this was an event which might happen. He considered the measure adopted by government a measure of salutary precaution, calculated to prevent a great evil. If a number of people were in a great theatre, and there was a false alarm of fire given, he apprehended the door-keepers could not do better than pre-

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vent the people from going out in large parties in great hurry, or let them go out by degrees; were they even to shut them in for a time, he apprehended that would be the means of preventing a much greater evil. Such he considered to be the tendency of the present stoppage of cash-payments at the Bank. A very large demand was made on almost every banking-house in the kingdom, and particularly on the Bank, for payment in cash; and this sudden demand it was which created this temporary difficulty and embarrassment. If the run upon the Bank had been permitted to continue, the ruin of the Bank must have followed; therefore the step which government had taken, was a step to prevent the total ruin of the Bank, and with it the ruin of public credit.—Gentlemen had said much of the public creditor. Were they not aware, that the holder of a bank-note, or a person who had demands upon the Bank, was not the only public creditor of this country? There were other public creditors, to whose convenience it became us to be attentive: he meant the army and the navy. He considered them to be as much public creditors as the holders of bank-notes could be; and their situation such as to require payment of what was due to them in cash, more so than any other description of men. If, therefore, what was lately going on at the Bank, would very soon have left them without specie, government were called upon to take the measure they had taken. So far from being inconsistent with public faith, it had for its object the preservation of public faith.—Much had been said on the constitution of the Bank of England. It was not for the holder of bank-stock only that such constitution was formed; and so it was declared in the charter of the Bank. It was instituted, as every other corporation was, for public purposes. The benefit of the holder of stock was an inferior object. The Bank, from the very nature of its charter, was bound to accommodate the nation; and therefore, when it was said that the Bank owed a duty to the holder of stock, it should be remembered they owed a duty also to the public, which, on occasions of public emergency, it was essential they should perform, for that was the great object of their institution; and if they did not perform the public purposes for which they were instituted, the power which created might also destroy them. The Bank, therefore, must

assist the government of the country. It was their duty so to do when any occasion required it; and it was particularly their duty in the present instance.—As to the eleven millions due from government to the Bank, it originated in a subscription of certain individuals, for which there was to be an interest at the rate of 3 per cent, and that deposit was held afterwards by government as a pledge for the payment of bank-notes, and was a security for the payment of demands that might be made upon the Bank: that sum was from time to time increased, until it amounted to eleven millions and upwards, upon which an annuity of 3 per cent was paid to the holder of bank-stock, to which a dividend of 3 per cent more had been added. But the right hon. gentleman was wrong in his calculation upon that subject. It was difficult to estimate the precise value of that stock, but according to the price which it now bore, he apprehended it would produce, if sold, between 15 and 16 millions; for this was not to be considered only as a capital, but, if sold, there would go with it the good-will of the trade, and therefore it was worth considerably more than the 11 millions capital stock.—He must now recur to the order in council. It was clear, that however affluent the Bank actually were, they could not pay all demands upon them in specie, because they could not convert their property into specie, and it would be impossible for commerce to go on if the Bank was drained of all its specie; this specie could not return until the course of commerce should bring it back again to the Bank. Whether the measure which was adopted by government was a wise measure or not, was foreign to this part of the argument, but he maintained that it was so far from being a breach of faith, that it enabled the Bank to keep their faith with the public. The consideration before the committee was, whether the measure should or should not be continued? and it did not appear to him that there was any difference of opinion upon that point. Some other measures might be suggested as a remedy in the present case; but the only one he had heard mentioned was, that of payment of the debt due from the public to the Bank. A considerable part of that was a floating debt of advance upon the produce of taxes, which was continually coming in, and which debt was therefore in the course of reducing itself. He apprehended that we ought not to reduce

the number of bank-notes, for we wanted them as a circulating medium; and if an attempt was made to bring them nearly upon a level with the quantity, not of the property, but the cash of the Bank, we might expect to see the Bank soon without notes, or without cash sufficient to carry on the purposes of commerce. He apprehended, if this necessary restriction was continued for a reasonable time, the course of trade would bring specie back again, and then the embarrassment would be over.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, that if he had not known the minister pretty well, and known that many of his adherents carried their system much farther than their leader, he should have been more astonished at the present plan than he was, even desperate as that plan was. If the speeches of the noble lord, and of the learned gentleman who had just spoken, really conveyed the sentiments of the minister, then, indeed, there could be nothing so desperate as the situation to which we were reduced, in reasoning as well as in finance. According to one of these orators, a forced paper currency was better than specie, and our commerce would increase in proportion as we violated the principles of honesty in paying our public debts. He thought that paper was only a good thing while we had the means of converting it into cash; but the noble lord thought it not only a cleaner, neater, and more portable and convenient medium to represent property, but the very essence of wealth itself, even when it could not be converted into specie, and that the flourishing state of our commerce was the cause of this inability to produce specie to answer the demands upon the Bank of England. Really, until he heard such nonsense, he could not have conceived that any such would have been uttered in that House. The chancellor of the exchequer, although he could not countenance had given birth to this kind of reasoning; and he wished, for his convenience, he could carry it into practice. What a pleasant thing it would be, to be able to show, from day to day, that the inability of the government to discharge the demands that were made upon it, was owing to the enormous increase of its wealth! What an entertainment it would be to the chancellor of the exchequer, to sit in his office and to receive collectors of the revenue, who should tell him they had all been out and had done their duty most diligently, but that the capital of

every man on whom they intended to levy taxes, was so enormously increased, that they were not any of them enabled to pay a single shilling! And yet such arguments from the collectors of taxes could not be more absurd, than the arguments that had been urged that night. The evil which was now the subject of complaint had been apprehended to arise from one of two causes; perhaps from both. The one was, that enormous sums of money had been sent abroad, the other, that men had been alarmed and had locked up vast quantities of specie in their coffers; and for this evil, it was supposed, that to issue an enormous quantity of paper would be a remedy! Those who thought so, he would venture to say, did not understand the nature of the evil.—The learned gentleman had entered into the nature of the constitution of the Bank. He had told the gentlemen opposite to him, that they were extremely ignorant of the nature of the constitution of the Bank; he had told them they mistook the meaning of the act of the 5th of king William, and that that act did not constitute the charter of the Bank for the private purposes of paying its creditors, but for the public purpose of assisting government; and that, if they did not answer this original and public purpose, the same power which created might also destroy them—a pretty good threat this, and a little more intelligible than had ever before been given them. The very learned gentleman who had accused others of being ignorant of the constitution of the Bank, had not, he was convinced, read one syllable of the constitution of the Bank; if he had, he could not have uttered such gross and palpable absurdities. The Bank instituted to accommodate government! No such thing, nor any thing like it. They lent the money to which the learned gentleman alluded, and which was now said to have accumulated to eleven millions, for a particular advantage which they purchased by so lending; but so far was it from being considered at that time, that it was to be the duty of the Bank to lend money to government in future, whenever government might apply for it, or when government might want it, that the very act of parliament expressed an apprehension of evil effects from too great a facility in lending money from the Bank to government, and therefore the act expressed, that no money should be advanced by the Bank to government, except upon sums that shall have been previously

voted by parliament; and this was prohibited under a penalty of treble the sum advanced, to be forfeited by the directors who should so advance it. So that this act, by which their constitution was created, had it in view that the Bank should never become what the present government had endeavoured to make it, the mere tool and engine of the king's ministers. And here it was impossible for him to abstain from adverting to the manner in which the provisions of this salutary act had been got rid of. This being the law of the land, the Bank directors would be bound to observe it; but, at the commencement of this war, a bill was brought in to do away the effect of the act altogether; not indeed under that title, nor was there any notice of any such intention, but a clause was smuggled into an act of parliament, avowedly brought in for another purpose, by which clause that provision in the act of king William, which prohibited the Bank from making any advances to government upon any but sums expressly voted by parliament, was repealed. The directors had before that time advanced money to government against law; they were indemnified for that illegal act, and were enabled to do so hereafter; for that wholesome provision of the act of king William, by which they were forbidden to do it, was now repealed: that repeal was the cause of our present calamity. Immediately after this, 1,500,000*l.* was advanced by the Bank to government, and was paid into the Treasury: and now the House would consider how well the learned gentleman, who had accused others of ignorance of the original constitution of the Bank himself understood that constitution. It was stated, that if government were to pay the Bank five millions the next day, it would not relieve them from the present pressure. Why not? Could they not purchase bullion with it? Really this mode of stating difficulties he did not understand. But this was a system fraught with the most dreadful evils; it was of the same complexion as that which laid the foundation of the ruin of the French finances, and led to all the horrors which have been so much deplored. The measure of the order in council was as violent as if it had been directed to any banker or private individual to lay hold of the cash in his coffers, and to rob him of it, under the pretence that it was intended for the public use. He did not see that ministers had laid before

the House any ground for a bill. What need had they for a bill, when it was notorious they would proceed without one, and as notorious that the Bank would obey them? If they acted illegally, he thought they ought to be left to their peril. There was no reason why the House should aid them, since they did not condescend to give any proof of the necessity of their measure. They had shown they could commit robbery; and as they did not offer any evidence of the necessity of any one thing, why should the House give them leave to bring in a bill to indemnify themselves? They ought to be left to go on in their own way. He warned the House of the effect of giving to ministers this facility of breaking the public faith. It would only encourage them to treat all thought of responsibility with contempt, and there was no possibility of knowing where their desperation would end. He believed we should not long be able, after the inundation of paper to which this system gave birth, to stop them from making bank notes a legal tender; and then, adieu to the appearance of specie at the Bank, and soon afterwards to the real value of a bank note!

Mr. Fox said, that in differing from Mr. Sheridan as to the propriety of voting for the introduction of this bill, it was a difference merely as to propriety, and not to principle. It was certainly most true, that in passing this bill they were enacting robbery and fraud; for robbery and fraud it was in direct and heinous characters; but it had now become an imperious necessity, that the illegal order of council, which had been illegally obeyed, should now be continued for a limited time by the force of a statute. All the other arguments of his hon. friend he fully adopted, and would repeat, that in giving his assent to the introduction of this bill, he neither passed an indemnity on the council for issuing the order, nor on the Bank for obeying it. The reasons given by the solicitor-general in justification of the measure, and his description of the character of the Bank, were additional alarms to his mind. According to his doctrine, the public establishment of the Bank was the creature of government, over which they might exercise whatever power the policy of the moment might dictate; for it was originally created for their use, and to be obedient to their pleasure. What an idea to put forth to the country! Not content with this ge-

neral doctrine, which identified the Bank with government, he had justified the interference of the state by asserting that the stopping of the money of individuals was a measure of wisdom, useful even to the creditors themselves, because it ultimately tended to their security? According to this doctrine, they might dispense with all the laws for the security of the national creditor. On this pretext they might lay a tax upon the funds the next day, though the law had secured them to be paid in money to the creditors. He deprecated all these false and fatal doctrines; all these deviations from the simplicity of rectitude from the morals of the constitution. They were as detestable in their character as they must be ineffectual in their practice. They would serve only to plunge us into ignominy as they had precipitated us into ruin, and leave us bankrupts in fame, as well as in fortune.

Mr. *W. Smith* entertained no doubts as to the solvency of the Bank, but could not agree with the solicitor-general in his statement of the constitution of the Bank. The original subscribers had not, in his opinion, the public service in view so much as their own pecuniary interests; and every subsequent act which had been passed, by which money had been borrowed from the Bank, showed that the ideas of parliament corresponded with this opinion. Parliament had never assumed a dictatorial control over the pecuniary concerns of the Bank. Terms on which money was proposed to be borrowed, had repeatedly been offered to the directors, but had never been imposed upon them. He denied, that the directors were warranted in sacrificing the interest of the proprietors to that of the public. As good patriots, and in point of national policy, they might be induced to run some risks for the public good; but the immediate object with which they were intrusted, and which they were immediately bound to take care of, was the interest of the proprietors. The premium which the Bank gave to the public for the renewal of its charter, was not to compromise its interest with the public, but it was a benefit conferred on the latter, in virtue of which the directors were empowered to pursue the concerns of the Bank, as might be most for the interest of the proprietors. If the act which had been forced upon the Bank by the order of council had been

the company's own act and deed, it could never have recovered the shock; but, as it was, he had little doubt but it would retrieve its credit. Not that he considered the city association of merchants as any criterion, or proof of the credit in which the Bank stood with the public; for he averred that that association would have signed the paper they did, even if they had known that the Bank would not pay, because it was their interest to support the Bank.

Leave was given to bring in the bill. Mr. Pitt then moved, That the secret committee be revived.

Mr. *Fox* said, he should negative the revival of this committee, constituted as it had been. A committee by ballot to inquire into the conduct of ministers in a measure that struck a blow at the vitals of the country, was not the sort of committee which either would or ought to satisfy the nation. It was notorious, that a ballot was a shameful stratagem by which a minister appointed his own judges. There was a servility in the last parliament which had enabled the minister to evade all inquiry; and it was notorious that that servility went the length of adopting one general list of names prepared and packed for the purpose of a ballot. The committee which it was proposed to revive had been so appointed. To such a committee he must object. If he should succeed in negating the motion, he should propose a committee for the same purposes, to be appointed by nomination.

Mr. *Grey* said, it was perfectly understood, that the nature of a secret committee of that House went only to impose upon its members that degree of secrecy on the matters that came before them, which their own discretion might think proper. There was no obligation of secrecy. It was not any divulging of the matters that came before them to say that a majority of the committee were of opinion that the order of the 26th of February was called for by necessity, and that the causes of the predicament justified government in the measure. He, however, did not agree with the majority: he was not satisfied with the evidence which satisfied them: he wanted a more circumstantial inquiry. The result of this difference of opinion was, that they finally agreed upon the report on the table, in which they had avoided all words that tended to give any opinion as to the ne-

cessity or the causes that produced it. Now, he submitted with what propriety, or to what good purpose, this committee could be revived, or at least his name be left on it. The majority that had been convinced without farther inquiry, would be convinced still; and he who could not deliver up his conscience and his honour, must retain the opinion which he had formed after a deliberate examination of all that had been brought before them.

The committee divided: Yeas, 174; Noes, 65. Mr. Douglas having reported the same to the House, the said committee was revived. Mr. Sheridan then moved, "That the right hon. C. J. Fox be added to the said committee of secrecy." He did it, he said, from the persuasion that his unparalleled talents and established integrity pointed him out to all England as the man to whom an inquiry so important ought to be committed. He was sure that, if the Bank themselves had the nomination, they would be eager to enrol his name in the list, that it might give character and credit to the report.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Sheridan - - - -	}	60
		Mr. Alderman Combe -	}	
NOES	{	Mr. Douglas - - - -	}	157
		Mr. Wallace - - - -	}	

So it passed in the negative.

Debate in the Commons on appointing a Select Committee to examine the State of the Public Finances.] March 10. Mr. Pitt, pursuant to notice, moved, "That a Select Committee be appointed to examine and state the total amount of the public debts, and of the interest and charges attending the same, as they stood on the 5th of January 1797; distinguishing what part thereof had arisen since the 5th of January 1793: and likewise of the amount of the produce, for each of the four years preceding the 5th of January 1797, of the permanent taxes which existed previous to the 5th of January 1793; and of the produce of the several taxes provided for defraying the increased charge of the public debt, within the said period; and to report their observations thereon to the House: likewise to examine and state the amount of any unfunded debt or demands outstanding on the 5th of January 1797; and of the expected total amount of the public expenses for the year ending the 5th of January 1798,

as far as the same can now be ascertained or estimated by the several offices; together with the amount of the Ways and Means that have been provided to defray the same."

The motion being agreed to, Mr. Pitt next moved, "That the said committee be chosen by way of balloting."

Mr. *Sheridan*, after what had passed on the subject of committees, was surprised the minister should persevere in having the committee appointed by ballot. The fact, that a ballot was the means of the minister packing his friends together to make a report upon his conduct, was notorious to the whole country. The House, in defence of its own dignity, ought no longer to be parties to such tricking, but should proceed at once to choose a committee openly in the House.

Mr. *Pollen* said, he knew nothing of any treasury list; but, after what had been said about influence, he should think it improper to take a list from either side of the House; and to do away all objections on this head, he would move, to insert after the word "be" the word "now."

Colonel *Porter* seconded the motion. He thought it extremely improper that any attempt should be made to bias the judgment of any member.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* supported the mode of proceeding by ballot. What harm, he asked, was there in five or six people talking together upon the names of those who were to compose a committee? It was impossible to carry on business if such captious objections as these were made. It was the first time he ever heard that a ballot was an engine of influence. There was no personal objection to any one of the last committee, and yet gentlemen complained of influence. There might be objections taken to either mode of appointing a committee. He had heard it said, that in choosing a committee by open vote, there was room for influence, and that choosing it by ballot, was a cover for rascality. These were topics which he would not discuss. He thought it unfair to form such a committee as this without notice.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, he was not surprised at the speech of the right hon. gentleman, because there was no hypocrisy in his public character, he had no cant, but always displayed his political profligacy in a bold and honest manner. If a list, however, were necessary, why did they not

recommend the names openly? They should recollect that the minister's recommendation was supposed to leave the House scarcely free in its choice; a ballot was therefore adopted as the most impartial mode of proceeding; and then, under the mask and cover of a secret list, the minister found means to exercise the same influence in a more delusive and fraudulent manner.

Mr. *Addington* disapproved of taking the House by surprise, and precluding gentlemen who might have attended if they had known of an immediate appointment by ballot.

Mr. *Fox* said, that with regard to the ballot, the only question was, whether it was fit the minister should nominate whom he pleased upon it? for that would be the effect of giving him time to prepare.

Mr. *Pitt* thought the House was not sufficiently full to proceed to the ballot now. He saw no more impropriety in preparing lists, or in one gentleman speaking to another upon a ballot, than there was in canvassing fairly at an election for a member to serve in parliament.

Mr. *Curwen* thought the House could not be too eager to stop the influence of the minister. Should the House come to a ballot now, there would be a chance of a committee that would not adhere to the wishes, of the minister. It was not by packing a committee to screen the minister that the country could be saved from impending ruin.

Mr. *Barham* apprehended, that unless this committee was fairly chosen, the public would cease to respect the House of Commons. He thought the minister ought to be glad to see his opponents on such a committee as this, if he was conscious of having conducted himself properly.

Mr. *Yorke* supported the ballot, and trusted they would not desert the practice of their ancestors.

Mr. *Grey* said, he should first vote for the amendment, and then oppose the whole question, inasmuch as he thought the whole bad. With respect to the ballot itself, he admitted the existence of influence; and his only wish was, that that influence should be seen, known, and felt by the public, that they might no longer be deluded by a farce.

The question being put, That the word "now" be there inserted, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Pollen - - - -	}	40
		Mr. Porter - - - -		
NOES	{	Mr. Charles Yorke -	}	123

The motion, That the said committee be chosen by way of balloting was then agreed to.

Debate on Mr. Sheridan's Motion for repaying to the Bank the Advances made for the Public Service.] Mr. *Sheridan* rose to make his promised motion. He said, that the order of council which required the Bank to stop payment, had not produced that alarm which any man predicting such an event would have imagined it would occasion. One great cause of this phenomenon was, that the commercial part of the country derived additional accommodation from the liberality of the Bank in discounts. If, previous to the order, the country was impoverished by the war to a degree that was not fully known, the prevalence of certain opinions upon this subject tended to conceal the reality of our situation. It was no doubt true, that individuals possessed of actual property, might be embarrassed for specie, or, what was now fashionably styled, a circulating medium. Such might be the case of the Bank, of the nation itself. This doctrine, however, had been pushed too far. Like every other principle, it was only true in the degree; and and when carried too far, produced the most mischievous consequences. The minister had laboured to bring the country to think, that the difficulties which they felt were a proof of their prosperity. If the order of council had not been issued, the aspect of affairs that day would have been more gloomy than that which it now presented. The minister felt he was in a situation, that if he insisted on the Bank doing its duty by discharging the just claims of their creditors, and of limiting their discounts, from the pressure which they [felt for cash, numerous failures must have taken place throughout the country, and produced a general indisposition to the continuance of the war. On the other hand, he was aware, that if he made no effort to enable the Bank to keep its faith with its creditors, but allowed the circumstances on which the order was founded to come to extremities, he might find a facility in affording a great temporary relief to the difficulties

which were experienced. This fact no man could deny. He would ask that respectable class of men, the bankers, of which there were many in the House, whether they had not themselves felt a great accommodation from the increased liberality of the Bank in discounts, and whether it did not enable them to give the same accommodation to others? All men engaged in extensive transactions, whether manufactures, a theatre, or any other concern whatever, felt this to be true. This was the true cause of the little dissatisfaction which had been exhibited: but it was likewise a serious symptom of the danger of our situation. It was an opiate which for a moment removed the sensation, but increased the cause. It for a time silenced alarm, and lulled asleep apprehension. The House should be careful, therefore, not only not to deceive the public, but not to deceive themselves. They ought not to be lulled into a false security, nor accept this temporary accommodation as a bribe to reconcile them to the mischiefs with which it was pregnant. He would not assign any particular time for the duration of this order, but he was convinced that if it continued for one month, the situation of the country would be such as to admit of no relief. The breach which credit had sustained, was one which would widen every hour, and which demanded the most speedy and effectual remedy. If the evil had arisen from a scarcity of specie, it was in three ways; by an extraordinary drain, by the balance of exchange, or by private hoards. He wished the House to see if they could devise any remedy which might supersede the necessity of continuing the order of council by legislative authority. If we were to continue it, necessity would join with habit to reconcile men's minds to it as a permanent system, and things would every hour become worse, till the possibility of regaining our former stability was gone for ever. Our situation must be retrieved now, or the country was ruined past redemption. He did not consider it too much to assume, that a forced circulation of paper would infallibly lead to bankruptcy, for how could we stop when we had begun. With regard to notes being made a legal tender, if the system was once begun, how was it possible to avoid this measure? It might be answered, that the paper money of this country rested upon a different security from that of the French assignats or mandats; but to this, he

would reply, that if they both contained the idea of compulsion, this ingredient alone would produce a depreciation, and though not in the same rapid progress, the paper of this country would ultimately experience the fate of the French. When depreciation is begun, new issues are made in the same proportion, till absolute ruin ensues. This he was desirous to avoid if possible, and therefore he was against any legislative authority for the order of council. The House had not yet understood that the measure was absolutely necessary for the Bank. The order of council, indeed, might bear one thing and mean another. It was stated, however, that the measure was in contemplation of public exigencies, and not because the Bank was unable to meet the demands of its creditors. But, taking the order as it stood, the cause of making the requisition to the Bank was for the public emergencies. In this opinion, the committee in their report seem to have coincided. He had a right to assume, therefore, that it was for the purposes of government, not from the deficiency of the Bank, that the order was issued. The House was called upon by legislative authority to declare, that they preferred the accommodation of government to the just claims of the public creditor. In this view, he wished to withhold his assent from such a measure; for if it was passed, he was afraid that the efforts to retrieve our affairs, and to re-establish the credit of the Bank, would be greatly relaxed. He wished, even if the order was to continue, that the urgency of the motives to apply a remedy might still be felt. But it may be said, if the measure is illegal, why keep it up illegally, when you may interpose legislative sanction? In the choice of difficulties, however, it was best to take the least; and, in his opinion, it was better to connive than to sanction. In other cases many orders had been issued by the privy council, which parliament had thought proper to overlook.—But was the Bank to be exposed to action upon their notes? This certainly was not a pleasant circumstance; but still the House ought to see that the Bank was not blameable in having brought on this state of things. That the right to sue and recover from the Bank was clear, could not be denied; but, every thing considered, he must be an evil-minded subject who could employ such an expedient; nor did he think there was much danger of its being used.—He should be

troubling the House to little purpose if he did not suggest some remedy to the evils which he deprecated, and as a substitute for that which he disapproved. What he had to propose, he conceived, would be attended with effect. The perfect re-establishment of the Bank was the great object which they ought to have in view; without this, the country was undone. All the expedients which had been talked of about new circulating mediums were delusive. It was the nature of confidence that when once forfeited, all claims to it were refused. General confidence was not founded on reasonings, but on experience. Men took a bank note because they saw a bank note paid the preceding day, and knew that it had been paid for a century, not because there might be plausible arguments of security to justify their confidence. They proceeded as the husbandman proceeds, to provide every thing which his agriculture requires, not upon a knowledge of the planetary system, but upon experience. It was experience of its being regularly paid that made men take a bank note. Unless, therefore, that confidence was restored, unless you could again give currency to the saying "as good as the Bank," no expedient would be crowned with success. The method of effecting this re-establishment was simple; it was by a fair avowal of the situation of the Bank in all its details. They would then know whether the present crisis was produced by errors and faults, and if errors and faults existed, they should be guarded against in future. It was of the utmost importance it should appear that errors and faults had been committed by the Bank in their connexion with the minister. The sentiments of Demosthenes, so often quoted, was one which was particularly applicable to our present circumstances. If we were reduced to our present distress without error or misconduct, the state of the country was desperate, and there was no chance of retrieving our affairs. It was the interest of the directors that the public should know the true state of things. On the face of matters, errors must have been committed. The modes which had been adopted to ascertain these points he did not expect would be productive of much advantage. But was it not important to know whether the Bank had ever demanded from government the sums which it had advanced, and whether ministers

had refused the claim? Was it not important to know whether the directors had remonstrated against any farther exports of specie, and the manner in which their representations were received? If they did act in this manner, then they escape the blame; but if they did not do what their duty required them to do, a clue might be found to discover that the state to which the Bank has been reduced, was owing to the misconduct of the directors. Above all, however, it was necessary to be explicit. The report of the committee had not stated any thing more than the gross sums of the amount of the debts and funds of the Bank; and however it might be known to some acquainted with their affairs in what their funds consisted, there still prevailed a mystery as to the balance in their favour, whether the greater part of the four millions was in cash or otherwise. The report of the committee ought likewise to have explained whether the order of council was adopted to accommodate the necessities of the Bank, or in contemplation of the exigencies of government. If it was on account of government, then there was no reason at all for inquiring into the state of the Bank. Yet, when the right hon. gentleman must have been much better acquainted with it than the committee, he had made this the pretence for inquiry. When the right hon. gentleman, however, upon that report stated that he had abandoned the idea of inflicting the guarantee of government upon the Bank, the information was cheered from every part of the House. It was, nevertheless, very extraordinary, that the right hon. gentleman, knowing what he knew, could have stated, as a pretence for inquiry, the intention of this guarantee. After inquiring whether the directors have done their duty, it would be found, perhaps, that the embarrassments of the Bank had arisen from a departure from the original object of their institution, and from too close a connexion with government. It was the more necessary to clear up and fix this point, after the ideas upon this subject advanced by the learned solicitor-general. Till such doctrines were held out to be unfounded, the credit of the Bank was irretrievable. It was unnecessary to guard against the effects of persuasion or of force, which might be employed by government at any future period. The Bank had departed from their original in-

stitution, contrary to the clause in the act of king William, prohibiting them from ever owing more than the amount of what was owing to them by government—a provision which left no risk to those with whom they transacted business. The departure from this principle had been likewise a cause of the difficulties under which they had laboured, and his first proposal was to restore the original principle. Another clause in the 5th of king William provides, that the Bank, under the penalty of forfeiting triple the amount, should not make any advances to government, but on funds granted by parliament. This tied up their hands from too liberal advances, and had continued with great advantage till within three years, when a clause to repeal it was thrust by a side wind into an exchequer loan bill, by which an indemnity was given for past advances, and the control removed in future. Since that period the Bank had made advances to government, which it could not have done had this provision existed.—His second proposal, therefore, was, to repeal the clause, and to re-establish the original prohibition. His third was, to enable the Bank to avail themselves of the capital due to them by government, and to give them means of recovery. These were the three points which he intended to propose. If the present capital was not sufficient, the sum of eleven millions might be increased, and then, independent of the profits of their transactions, and the assets they possessed, as long as the country existed the creditors of the Bank would have security in their dealings. These were the proposals which he meant to submit, in the view of proposing likewise that government should repay a part at least, of the advance which the Bank had made; for while the vicious practices he had exposed continued to prevail, no permanent advantage could be expected. It certainly was a natural question to ask, why government had not repaid some of the advances made by the Bank? Why did not the right hon. gentleman call upon the country to contribute their assistance on so important an occasion? After the vaunted spirit, the boasted resource of the nation, would it be impracticable to raise a sum of five or six millions within a few days for the important purpose of enabling the Bank to fulfil its engagements, and retrieve its credit? If there was no feeling of justice, of honour, of integrity,

of patriotism, to prompt exertions on such an occasion, it was all over with this country. No purpose of war, no necessity of public service, no demand for pecuniary aid to the emperor of Germany, could present a more forcible claim, or a more honourable cause of exertion. He did not think so ill of the country as to believe that the appeal could be resisted. If this were done, the Bank might continue its discounts fairly, and with its own substance. Now, however, when the House was discussing its solvency, was it right that the Bank should give an increased accommodation in the way of discount far beyond its former liberality? It was true that the debt due by government to the Bank consisted of many articles, but it had been increasing greatly upon the head of exchequer bills. Instead of embarrassing the Bank by the advances it had made, it would be far better to raise elsewhere the sums which the Bank advanced on the securities it received, and in this manner at least remove part of the pressure which the magnitude of the debt due by government had occasioned. The three first propositions he wished to be resolved in a committee of the whole House, at present he should conclude with moving, “That, it appearing to this House that the effects of the Bank, on the 25th Day of February last, amounted to 17,597,280*l.*, and that the outstanding demands on the Bank amounted to 13,770,390*l.*; and it farther appearing that there is owing to the Bank by government, for advances made for the public service, the sum of 9,964,413*l.*, exclusive of the permanent debt due from government of 11,686,800*l.*, it is highly expedient, as well for the honour of his majesty’s government as for the re-establishment of public credit, that the speediest measures should be taken for the re-payment to the Bank of the said advances, or a considerable part thereof.”

Mr. Pitt said, that before he touched upon the proposal for paying off the whole or part of the sums due by government to the Bank, he should say a few words to the preliminary topics, upon which the hon. gentleman had insisted. The hon. gentleman seemed to think, that the House should adopt no legislative measure to sanction the order of council, confessedly illegal. He next reprobated the mode of inquiry by secret committees, which the House has already

decidedly approved, with a view to keep from the public what it was not prudent to divulge, and wished that the utmost publicity should be given to all the concerns of the Bank. The next proposal was, to limit the operations of the Bank within the sum of the permanent debt due by government, and likewise to enable the Bank to avail themselves of the capital sum due by government, in case of necessity. The immediate practical measure, however, was to pay off the advances which the Bank had made to government, for the purpose of setting the Bank free, and enabling them to proceed in their usual manner. The point which it was necessary for the House to consider was, whether this measure, combined with the other regulations, would produce the effect intended? Although the hon. gentleman professed an intention of not opposing, by his vote, the legislative sanction being given to the order of council, and therefore there might be ultimately no practical difference, he had thought proper to renew the argument on a subject already so much discussed; and it was singular, after the almost unanimous sense of the House of the necessity of a legislative sanction, that he should now expect to prevail upon the House to change its judgment. The hon. gentleman complained, that the committee had not reported more explicitly the necessity which produced the order of council. It certainly, however, was not a little strange in the hon. gentleman to attempt to provoke a disclosure of circumstances which were purposely referred to a secret committee that they might not be divulged, and call upon any individual member to communicate circumstances of which he was confidentially informed. The hon. gentleman said that it was impossible to proceed without knowing publicly the situation of the Bank, yet professing himself to be ignorant, and without waiting for information, he assumed, that the proposal which he made was the only remedy for the distresses under which the country laboured, and would have the House, upon this authority, to adopt his remedy and to reject the other. It was not a little remarkable in the hon. gentleman to contend that it would be better to allow the order of council to remain unconfirmed than to sanction it by authority, and to prefer a stretch of power to the act of the law.—With regard to the proposal for limiting within twelve mil-

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lions the sum which the Bank should issue, it certainly did not follow, that a limitation which had been found beneficial at the commencement of an undertaking, was fit to be adopted in different circumstances: after the Bank had subsisted for a century, after having, by its judicious distribution of its capital, given rise to so much general prosperity, it was a question, whether any mercantile principles required that caution, which had at the beginning proved salutary. At any rate, since it was considered as such a security to the creditors of the Bank, to have government security to the extent of their capital, were there not other securities on which the Bank might extend their operations equally good, or at least more available?—He then proceeded to discuss the subject of diminishing the quantity of paper in circulation. He would leave it to the House to determine, whether, under the pressure of present circumstances, the most natural way to extricate the country out of difficulties would be, that of having too little paper in circulation, while there was too little cash. At a time when there was a great commerce, without a sufficient quantity of cash to keep it afloat, the hon. gentleman was desirous of limiting the circulation of paper, the only means of affording a temporary relief to credit. This paper circulation, at the same time that it was the most likely means of replacing the balance of cash, and giving vigour and energy to commerce, should certainly be confined within proper limits: in that case, it would have the effect of drawing forth that cash, which persons from their fears, or other local habits, might withhold from the public. It appeared to him, that, under the present circumstances, there were principles of ultimate security that should form the limits within which an increased circulation of paper would be perfectly safe. But, for the purposes of barter and for keeping up the course of exchange, a certain medium was necessary; and that medium might chiefly consist of paper under the limitations already alluded to; and beyond which, if it should be forced, it would then fall below its nominal value. If this paper was taken by the general consent of the people, and if they had a confidence in it, as he trusted they would have, it was then as useful a medium of exchange as any other that could be adopted. But if the country should once

be surcharged with paper, it would have as ruinous effects as would be produced from the plan recommended by the hon. gentleman, of lessening the quantity of paper in circulation. He was convinced, therefore, that it was wise to let the Bank have a discretion upon this subject; and he was also averse to imposing any restrictions upon them, which he considered as extremely impolitic. With respect to some specific limitation of the discount of bills of exchange, a measure of that nature might with great propriety be referred to the consideration of a committee.—It had been urged with considerable earnestness, by the hon. gentleman, that the capital advanced by the Bank, should be made demandable; but it might be fairly asked, what were the means which he intended to provide, or what particular plan he meant to pursue to enable the public to pay that capital in money? He was equally at a loss to ascertain how such a step would improve the situation of the Bank. The hon. gentleman took infinite pains to extol the limitation enjoined on the Bank in the act of king William, and it was curious to observe the manner in which he applied it to the present restriction. If he were really serious in his wishes to make the Bank pay all its legal creditors; in other words, if he desired that specie alone should be given for the amount of all the outstanding debts, such a proceeding would not bring him an atom nearer to his acknowledged purpose of effecting the re-establishment of specie; but would, on the contrary, produce a more sensible diminution than what was actually complained of. The hon. gentleman had submitted to the House a resolution, that such parts of the sums advanced by the Bank to government as could be discharged, should be repaid with all possible speed. But how was this to be reconciled with the other arguments brought forward by the hon. gentleman? He would not leave any thing to chance; yet that was absolutely the case in the management of every banking concern. He, therefore, assuming that ground, proceeded to maintain, that if every person holding notes was not paid in cash, the Bank committed an act of bankruptcy. Yet he was, almost in the same breath, sanguine enough to hope, that if nine millions, or six millions, were paid by the public to the Bank, they would be adequate to meet all the pressure of the money demandable

from the Bank by its creditors. When such positions and such strange conclusions were hazarded, it was certainly a fair question to put to the hon. gentleman, how far so small a sum as nine or six millions would re-establish the security of the Bank, restore public confidence, and replace the drain of cash which had been produced, either by the influence of sudden panic, or by the exportation of specie? If the hon. gentleman, instead of disheartening the public mind and dealing in invective, would come forward and lend his assistance to remove the difficulties that clogged the credit of the country, he should be happy to co-operate with him. The hon. gentleman had declared that six millions might be raised in a few days for the payment of the Bank; but that was a position which he assumed without proof. He could not reconcile himself to the magic way in which it was proposed to raise these six millions. But, even if they were raised, and payment was absolutely made to the Bank, such a proceeding would not increase the quantity of cash, for it was evident, if the whole quantity of specie were now reduced to six millions, and the Bank notes were wrapped up in the Bank, that such a measure would not suspend, but would rather increase the present embarrassment. For while there was a temporary want of cash, a sudden diminution of the paper currency would prove the most violent shock which the trade and credit of the country could receive. He was convinced on all these grounds, that the reduction of the advances by the Bank was not in the least likely to produce the effect held out by the hon. gentleman's proposition; and as they went directly to anticipate the two inquiries which were on foot, he should conclude by moving the previous question.

Mr. Fox said:—Before I enter upon the merits of the proposition before the House, I must make a few observations upon an insinuation in the latter part of the right hon. gentleman's speech against my hon. friend. He wishes my hon. friend would exert his influence and abilities in calling forth the public spirit, by heartening the nation on the state of their affairs. Have we not had, Sir, enough of this childish deception? Are we to reason like children, that, because we shut our eyes, others will not see? Have we not had enough of this kind of heartening from the right hon. gentleman. Have we not paid dearly for

all his harangues? Is the country in a state of calamity or is it not? If our situation is critical, it is not to be improved by inspiring the people with a false security. No: we must abandon our delusions, and look our danger boldly in the face. The loss of credit must be a very serious loss to any country, but it is more particularly so to this; because it was its credit which laid the foundation of that superiority which it has held in the scale of nations. When this credit is shaken, and when it is found necessary to introduce a compulsory paper currency, he who knows the country to be in this state of calamity and talks of heartening it, is, in my opinion, answerable for all the evils which may befall it. I shall now make a few observations upon the objections urged against the proposition of my hon. friend. The whole of my hon. friend's speech was applicable to a regulation which he thought ought to be adopted, and not to a law which my hon. friend thinks ought not to be passed. The right hon. gentleman professes to think, that though the Bank were restricted from making advances to government, it would not operate as a present relief to the Bank. I am of a different opinion; for it would increase the confidence of the people in the Bank, which has been diminished by the idea that it is too compliant with the wishes of government.—But the question now before the House rests upon the propriety of paying off a considerable part at least of the debt due from the public to the Bank. One objection which the right hon. gentleman has started against this measure is, that it will stop circulation. Now, I cannot conceive a more desperate principle put into practice, than when there is a disproportion between the cash and paper in circulation, to attempt to restore the proportion by encreasing the quantity of circulating paper. I think such a principle must originate in a confusion of ideas respecting the foundation of cash and paper currency, which are widely different. Paper and cash, as circulating mediums, are founded upon principles almost directly opposite: and when there is a deficiency of the one, it is not to be remedied by an increase, but by a diminution of the other. Gold and silver are, properly, the true circulating medium, and paper is only valuable as their representative, and as resting upon their security. The right hon. gentleman contends, that it is extremely dangerous at this mo-

ment to diminish the quantity of paper. Every thing now is dangerous. But what is the danger which, in this case, is to be apprehended. It is the depreciation of the paper; a danger which is every day increasing. Shall I be told that paper as yet is not depreciated? From whence then proceeded the extraordinary run upon the Bank? No such circumstance would have happened had paper, in the estimation of the public, been of equal value with cash. What, then, is proper to be done? Put the case of a private banker. The most wealthy banker in London is at all times liable to have greater demands made upon him, than it is in his power to answer. Supposing, then this to happen, what step would he take? He would stop payment for a time, for the purpose, not of lending more, but of calling in his debts, and of giving currency to every possession that he has, in order to liquidate the whole of his demands, and to commence *de novo*. Such a conduct, it may be urged, would be attended with great public inconvenience, were it adopted by the Bank. But the question is, in the balance of evils, which is the least? But, says the right hon. gentleman, my hon. friend proposes this measure now before the House, as an immediate and all-powerful remedy. My hon. friend is, perhaps, of opinion, that its operations would be more immediate than I may suppose they would be; but I think there cannot be a doubt, that at least it would have a beneficial tendency. The right hon. gentleman asks, if five or six millions repaid by government to the Bank would operate as a charm? If he means by a charm, its preventing any demands from coming upon the Bank, to which they would otherwise be liable, I say it would operate as a charm. But, says he, "it would not enable the Bank to pay all the demands which might be made on it in specie." It is not necessary that it should. Does he think that the evil never can be cured till government and the Bank pay all their debts in specie? If he does, he must think our situation even worse than I believe it to be. It is sufficient that the remedy shall enable the Bank to answer all the demands that are made upon it, which certainly would be considerably limited, in consequence of an association entered into by the most respectable merchants and traders in the kingdom. Will he show any more probable remedy? He looks to the trade of the country. We look to it also. But is

there any thing in my hon. friend's proposition which will obstruct this operation of trade? The payment of the debt due to the Bank might not, perhaps, be a sufficient remedy of itself; but assisted by the association, and even by the bill which is to be brought before the House, which, in my opinion, will also be necessary, it would be much more effectual than the single operation of that bill.—The right hon. gentleman says, it may form part of a future plan, which may be the result of previous inquiry. But if the measure is calculated to ease the public mind, or to lessen the embarrassments, why not at present give a pledge to the country that it shall be adopted? Time is precious; and the longer a compulsory paper currency is continued, the greater is the chance of depreciation. I call it a compulsory currency; for though I do not know whether it is intended to make it compulsory between individuals, it is already made compulsory between two great bodies, the government and the Bank. The more I consider the subject, the greater difficulty I find in forming an opinion upon the expediency of extending the compulsion to private individuals. I would only suggest, whether, in consequence of the respectable and extensive associations that have been formed, the Bank might not venture to make an exception of the public creditor, and to pay him in cash? The question upon which the House have now to decide is simply this, whether the liquidation of the debt due from the government to the Bank, which is admitted on all hands to be expedient, ought to be executed as a part of the minister's plan of finance, or in consequence of an independent resolution of the House? I have no hesitation in saying, that I think the latter mode is far preferable, both in a constitutional view, and as a mean of restoring public credit. How has the credit been injured? By the inactivity of the House of Commons. How can credit be restored? By the activity of the House of Commons. How has credit been sunk? By the confidence of the House of Commons. How can credit be raised? By the vigilance of the House of Commons. Credit never was the offspring of an absolute government. In this country it was born under the auspices of liberty, and matured by the fostering influence of a free constitution. Since the principles of liberty were abandoned, and the blessings of that constitu-

tion renounced, is it surprising that public credit has been lost in arbitrary power? This, Sir, may be called declamation. But I ask, how you feel? Do you feel yourselves in health? If you do, for God's sake go on with your regimen. If you do not, let not that be termed declamation which is a true statement of your real situation. In favour of the motion, then, my hon. friend, there is the universal opinion that the measure it recommends is proper to be adopted, and a conviction consequent upon this opinion, that the sooner it is adopted the better. Against it, there is the delay necessary for an inquiry, the points of which we know before it is instituted, and the wish of the minister that the measure may come before the public recommended by himself. I leave it to the good sense of the House to decide upon the validity of the arguments on both sides. I cannot, however, sit down without earnestly entreating every individual member, coolly and deliberately to consider the question, "whether the deficiency of cash at present existing, ought to be supplied with paper? or rather, whether it ought not to be corrected by diminishing the quantity of paper in circulation? and whether, instead of looking to an extended commerce for the restoration of our credit, we ought not first to restore our credit, that we may be afterwards enabled to extend our commerce? If there is one maxim which I have been accustomed to believe as more certain than another in the philosophy of politics, it is this, that the resources of a commercial country depend upon its credit, and that to look for commerce after credit is extinct, is to look for an effect without a cause.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, he saw it was the intention of the right hon. gentleman to have a forced paper currency. It was in vain to contend against the torrent which had broken in on the country. We were doomed to all the horrors of a paper circulation, and that House tamely acquiesced in the desolation of all that was sacred in the kingdom. Already it was believed, that between 3 and 4 millions of paper more had been issued by the Bank since the stoppage of payments in cash, and to what extent they might carry it, it was seemingly a matter of no importance to inquire.

The previous question being put, That that question be now put, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. William Smith	}	45
		Mr. Tierney - -		
NOES	{	Mr. Douglas - -	}	185
		Mr. Pybus - -		

So it passed in the negative.

March 13. The House proceeded to ballot for a select committee, to examine the State of the Public Finances. The following members were chosen, viz. Mr. Steele, Mr. Abbot, Mr. T. Stanley, Mr. Gregor, Mr. J. H. Addington, Mr. W. Baker, Mr. C. Yorke, Mr. Ryder, Mr. H. Thornton, Mr. Burdon, Mr. Carew, Mr. Crewe, Mr. St. John, Mr. Harrison, and Mr. Sheridan.

Debate on Mr. Harrison's Motion for the Reduction of Useless Places, Sinecure Offices, &c.] March 13. Mr. Harrison said:—In consequence of the notice which I gave, I rise to submit to the consideration of the House my reasons for the motion which I shall have the honour of laying before them. There is a marked similitude in the economy of public affairs to that of the private concerns of an individual. From the same causes the same effects are produced. We are all sensible into what situation an individual must be brought who is pursuing a system of expenditure so much beyond the receipt of his income, as only to be supported by creating new burdens upon his estate, till the income itself is swallowed up by the incumbrances he has brought upon it. Yet, melancholy as the reflection must be, such is the situation into which the prodigality of ministers has brought the finances of this kingdom. And after all those delusions and misrepresentations by which they have endeavoured to keep the evil out of sight, it has at last broke forth with redoubled violence, and has compelled ministers to take that unfortunate step which must destroy the credit of the nation in the face of all Europe. It is natural to suppose that ministers would of themselves, under the pressure of such difficulties, have sought to assist the wants of the public by endeavouring to lessen the waste of the public money, by retrenching the emoluments attached to the useless sinecure offices, and places, with little or no official duty annexed to them, that are to be found in every department. But if any sinecure office becomes vacant, instead of

letting it rest as a relief to the public, it is seized with avidity; nay, we see them even granting reversions, to preclude others from relieving the public from such useless burdens. As the difficulties of the state increase, the extravagance in every official department increases likewise. We see new boards established, new places created, persons, long established in offices, removed with grants of pensions and sinecure places, to them and their descendants, not because from age or ill health they have been found unable to discharge the duties of their station, but to make room for others. It is such prodigality that has brought the country into the situation it now stands in; and shall we, as guardians of the public purse, not use our endeavours to stop such a system of prodigality and corruption? I have no scruple in saying that there is a system of influence and corruption prevailing amongst us to a degree, which, if not overcome, will bear down the constitution of this country. I am convinced it may be legally and quietly corrected by provisions made within these walls. If it is not, it is my firm belief, it will be done turbulently from without. In times like the present, does it not become prudent to show an inclination to make every possible saving in the public expenditure? Much as any saving to the public at this time of pressure must weigh in the mind of every one who has the welfare of his country at heart, yet there is another consideration that weighs strongly in my mind—the influence that is created by the unbounded patronage that it places in the hands of the minister. To that we may attribute the commencement of this ruinous war—to that we may attribute the obstinate perseverance in the contest with America. And since that time the newly created boards, the management of the East India company's affairs, and a variety of new offices and increased fees and emoluments, have greatly overbalanced any reduction that has been made in the useless expenditure of the public money, or the undue influence that is created by it. In the arrangement on the revival of the office of third secretary of state, the public was saddled with pensions to the amount of 5,000*l.* per annum, besides above as much more for the expense of the office itself. In the war-office there is an accumulation of fees to an enormous amount; some of them are returned into other offices, but

still the public ought to know the service to which they are applied. There is a fee of one guinea on every 100*l.* on contingent bills and extraordinaries of the army, called the guinea fee, which, from the immense expenditure must amount to a very great sum: add to that, the fees paid for all commissions and changes in the army and for recruiting and beating orders. The manner in which very expensive works are carried on, without estimate or contract, as in the barracks now erecting in the liberty of Peterborough, must subject the public to great imposition, and increase of expense beyond what might be absolutely necessary. In the navy department, the due performance of the duty of the respective offices is so essential to the public, that none ought to be discharged but by the persons themselves, but which, upon investigation, will be found by no means the case. This last summer the public were saddled with an increased salary of 1,600*l.* per annum to the eight commissioners of the navy, though the victualling board was at the same time abolished. A continual charge is brought upon the public from the unnecessary expense incurred by the erecting large houses for the port admiral, the deputy governor of Portsmouth, and the repairs of Carisbrook castle, &c. Great fees still remain payable at the exchequer from all accountants that come before them. Multiplied boards for the collection of small revenues are still matter of great charge to the public. In the law offices great emoluments arise from a variety of sinecure offices, or where the duty, if any, is discharged by a deputy. The customs and post office will be found replete with useless sinecure offices and appointments and, in many instances, held by persons in boroughs, for the purpose of creating parliamentary influence. We all know, Sir, that the persons in the different establishments of the household are four, five, and six quarters in arrears, while the greatest extravagance prevails in all other departments. But enough has been said to convince the House of the necessity that exists for the inquiry that is the object of my motion: which is, "That the extent of the Supplies voted to government, since the commencement of the present war, having caused so heavy an increase of taxes, it is the duty of this House to inquire whether some relief to the burthens of the people, or provision for future expense, may not be obtained by the reduc-

tion of Useless Places, Sinecure Offices, Exorbitant Fees, and other modes of Retrenchment in the Expenditure of the Public Money."

Lord *William Russell* said, that this was not a time for those who felt the critical situation to which the country was reduced to remain silent. It was a period when every man ought to come forward and declare his sentiments. Nothing but unanimity, not such unanimity which had prevailed within those walls, could save the country from the dilemma in which it was now placed by the prodigal expenditure of the present administration. The melancholy events which had lately taken place, would perhaps force the House to adopt that line of conduct they ought ere now to have pursued. The necessity of some reform had been recognized by almost every gentleman who had spoken on the present state of public affairs. He called upon them to evince the sincerity of their professions. He was fully convinced that mere economical regulations would not be sufficient remedies for our present situation. To save the country, it would be necessary to obtain the co-operation, of the people, and to obtain their co-operation it was necessary to obtain their confidence. It was necessary, however, to accomplish this, to evince, by some decisive conduct, that they were not actuated by motives of personal aggrandizement, that they were not merely employed in securing power, places, and pensions for themselves. He trusted, however, that notwithstanding the attempts which had been made to violate their rights and to subdue their spirit, the people of this country were still animated by the principles of liberty, and by sentiments of attachment to that free constitution they once enjoyed, and that they were anxious to recover what they had lost. To cherish and to keep alive these sentiments, it was necessary to restore to them those rights of which they had been deprived. He concluded with seconding the motion.

Mr. *Pitt* said:—With respect, Sir, to the manner in which the hon. gentleman has opened his motion, I am led to observe, that he has not entered into any specific grounds to support it. He has confined himself to very general statements, and he seems to have reserved himself for a particular detail on some other opportunity. The hon. gentleman appears, from the words of his motion, to have two different

objects in view. The first relates to making retrenchments, and correcting profusion in the established offices of government, and in sinecure places and pensions. The second has for its object an inquiry into the state of the national expenditure, and proposes a check on the expenses of the state. This, it is needless for me to urge, is comprehended in a resolution which has already passed this House, to inquire into the finances of the country, and to consider of the most practicable means for obtaining a diminution of the public expenditure. The hon. gentleman means to include in the investigation which he proposes, subjects of the most extensive and complicated nature. He wishes to embrace all the ordinary and extraordinary expenses of the different branches of government. He extends his inquiry into the disbursements of the army, navy, and every public establishment. I am ready to admit, that as far as this proposition goes, it forms a subject worthy the consideration of the House; and the magnitude of it appears to be such, that no man can say what will be the effect of it, or to what particular measures it may lead. Yet, Sir, the hon. gentleman, bringing before the House considerations of such extensive views, and of such high importance, adopts a very singular mode of proceeding. He does not think proper to offer matters so momentous and complicated in their relations in a direct manner to parliamentary discussion, but states them as the objects of a collateral inquiry, and introduces them immediately after his motion for retrenchment in the offices of government. But certainly the hon. gentleman will not deny that there is an extreme difference between both objects: for the check which he proposes on the public expenses very much exceeds in importance that reform which he wishes should take place in the establishment and salaries of public offices. The distinction between these two objects being so evident, as the latter does not form any part whatever of the proposition formerly submitted to the House by the hon. gentleman, nor of the notice which he gave of his motion of this night, I must consider the manner of introducing it not only irregular, but inadequate to the magnitude of the inquiry which he proposes to establish. I also think it necessary to remind gentlemen, that the objects which it comprehends, form the grounds of my motion for the appointment of the com-

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mittee which has been this night chosen by ballot. I stated in general terms, previous to my bringing forward that motion, the various points to which the attention of the committee was to be directed; but I could not until I had appointed that committee, proceed to offer, in a specific manner, each of these points. I therefore only stated, that it was my wish and desire to move, as an instruction to the committee, that after inquiring into, and ascertaining the whole state of the finances of the country; after reviewing the whole amount of the debt which had been incurred during the war; after investigating the provision which had been made to meet it; after considering the probable amount of the total expense of public service for the whole of the year 1797, and the sums now applicable for defraying it;—I say, Sir, after taking these steps, it was also my intention to move that farther instruction should be given to the committee to exercise a full power in forming and digesting a plan for controlling the public expenditure, and to inquire into, and report upon, the best and most practicable means for obtaining a diminution thereof. I therefore am not a little surprised, after stating these measures in general terms, that the hon. gentleman should now bring forward a motion to the same end, and without any previous notice. The instruction for the committee, the nature of which I had thus before stated in general terms, I held in my hand ready to move, when the hon. gentleman brought forward his motion; for I certainly did not think any new proposition on the same subject could be urged, after an express declaration of my desire that the most speedy and effectual measures should be taken, which went to retrench the heavy expenses of war, and were of infinitely superior magnitude to any diminution that might be expected in the salaries of the public offices.

Without entering at this moment into a particular discussion, whether there exists any specific grounds to authorize the House to proceed to a reduction of useless offices, or to a retrenchment of profuse salaries, I can only say, that it is not my wish to oppose an inquiry to that effect. But I feel I shall not do my duty to the House and the public, if I were to agree to any other examination than that which I have proposed, and which has received the concurrence of the House. The hon. gentleman has, however, neg-

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lected many important, and, indeed, necessary considerations in suggesting his motion. He seems, in the first place, to have been unmindful that the limits of the proposed reduction should be expressly declared. He next forgets, that the steps which have been already taken to effect the same end, should be submitted to the consideration of parliament, as a guide to direct their measures; and above all, that no ill-founded hope may be raised without fully looking into the subject on which the decision is to be formed. If it can appear that retrenchment, both in the number and expense of public offices, is calculated to promote the public service, I am convinced there is no man in this House that will oppose it. But the question now before us is, what are the specific grounds on which the hon. gentleman brings forward his motion? It is incumbent on him to point out, in a decisive manner, abuses which are said to exist in the performance of duties, or in payments for services which are not done for the public. I know, Sir, how very easy it is to give credit out of doors to the reports of abuses in sinecure places and pensions; but I really believe it is a subject as much mistaken as any other of a public nature. I therefore think, in whatever way the inquiry may terminate, that it will not be of much utility. If it can be shewn that there are strong grounds for correcting abuses, much may be gained for the public good; but if, on the contrary, it shall appear that there are no specific grounds to warrant a strong measure of that kind, and that the idea of the prevalence of abuses in the offices of the state is erroneous, much also is gained by removing an opinion, which might otherwise diminish the national confidence. Offices of very different descriptions come within the hon gentleman's motion: the first which present themselves to notice are absolutely necessary, and in respect to them the inquiry fairly stated is, whether or no the number of offices is more than the different duties of them require; and secondly, whether the reward for the exercise of the various talents and industry necessary for the due execution of them is too great? It might also form a most important consideration, whether the same talents, the same diligence, and perseverance, at present employed in the performance of the duties annexed to these offices, might not be rewarded in an equal or superior manner, were they applied to

and exerted in the ordinary pursuits of life? I have, Sir, no hesitation in saying, that it is an unjust idea to imagine, that the abilities and labour devoted to the service of the public should not be paid as well, and to the full as liberally by the public, as those which are applied in private life to the interest of individuals, and which are rewarded by individual compensation. Next to the offices which I have noticed, and which must be viewed in a necessary light, I come to those which relate to state duties. Many of them are attended with considerable expense for the maintenance of the relative duty they should hold to the high ranks in life of those, near whom they are placed. If we look into the various offices connected with the army, the navy, and the revenue, we shall find that the wages they receive are not higher than those they might earn by an equal exertion in private life, from individuals; and, therefore, Sir, the real state of the question appears to be, whether they are paid in a larger way by the public, than they would be by particular persons, for the performance of equal services. I only state this, that gentlemen may turn it in their minds, and not be induced to take up the matter in a general view. There are unquestionably offices of another description—of less business and with fewer duties attached to them; but I think it necessary to observe, that they arise out of our ancient manners, and are, in fact, the remnants of former times, attached to the splendor of majesty, and attendant on the dignity of monarchy. I am not inclined to say what should be the exact sum for duties of this kind. I only maintain, that such offices have ever existed; and such has been the custom of all countries which have been governed by monarchs. This custom has been interwoven in our constitution, and forms an appendage to our mixed government; not for the display of idle parade: not for the loose gratification of idle vanity, but sanctioned by the authority of our ancestors, and continued for the dignified consistency of appearance in the king of a great and free people. Having noticed this branch of public duties, I shall only observe, that though not included in the first class, they should notwithstanding be considered as connected with our constitution of a mixed monarchy. Another description of office is of a more invidious nature than any I have yet mentioned. I

allude to sinecure places, which, notwithstanding the ridicule and severity with which they may be commented on by some gentlemen, are capable of being looked at with the eye of reason. I shall, Sir, shortly state the principles on which they stand. They stand on the invariable custom of this country; they are recognized by the solemn decisions of parliament. It will not, I trust be denied, that the fair principle of honourable remuneration has ever been held a sacred consideration. It will not, I hope, be contested, that a provision and retreat for a life devoted to the public service, has ever been deemed a just and irresistible motive for conferring permanent rewards.

The question then presents itself, whether at the instant when one common sweep is designed, to remove all offices in which actual duty is not performed, remuneration for actions done in the service of the state is a wise, a just, and a useful principle? Another inquiry will naturally arise, and that is, whether the mode in which they are distributed is more liable to abuse than any other? In the consideration of this question, I will not confidently maintain that the first principle of remuneration may not sometimes be misapplied, as it frequently depends on chance, discretion, and various causes, which it is unnecessary for me to enumerate. It may also be objected, that it cannot be ascertained by a precise rule how to reward precise merit. But then, Sir, I say, can any other method more efficacious, more independent of abuses, and less liable to errors, be adopted? Can any other mode be pointed out in which chance and discretion are to be completely laid aside? Suppose, Sir, for a moment, that even an application to parliament should be made the constitutional way of bestowing this kind of rewards; can it be imagined that such a proceeding would produce less complaint and murmurs than the present way in which they are conferred? I beg, therefore, gentlemen will not conclude, because there may be some offices connected with government which it may be wise to reform, that all are indiscriminately to be wiped away. I should imagine, that a correct and particular statement ought to be made of useless offices, and excessive salaries; that specific objections should be precisely stated, and thus, by pursuing an authentic detail, the House might be enabled to entertain a probability of the

saving which could be made for the country. But, Sir, if without resorting to any of these indispensable measures, if without establishing a proper clue, which in the course of inquiry would lead to a just conclusion, you were to precipitate this business, I must contend, that instead of striving to meet the popular opinion, instead of serving the essential interests of the nation, you would, on the contrary, act in opposition to both, and even excite general discontent. In such a case, the House would not do justice to themselves, nor to their constituents. This is not, however, the first time that you have been called on to interfere in similar considerations. The hon. gentleman brought forward, in the last parliament, a resolution of the same nature which he has this night proposed; and the event of it is fresh in every person's recollection.* In a former parliament, a plan which contained a particular detail, which furnished a full statement of the grounds of the application, and which went to a general economical reform, was brought forward by a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Burke), who is no longer a member of this House; yet parliament, at that period, and in an hour of confessed necessity, with every possible authority before them, with every document which a well-digested and a judiciously executed plan could furnish, with the report of the commissioners invested with powers to examine into the various branches comprehended in the proposed reform—proceeded in a very cautious and limited manner. They abolished some offices, and reduced the value of others; but they did not allow themselves to extend their reform beyond a prudential and constitutional line of conduct; and, what cannot be too closely attended to, they effected no change nor modification whatever, without the aid of incontrovertible evidence, and the assistance of positive fact. They wisely lopped off whatever was proved to be superfluous, and they made reductions to the amount of many thousand pounds. To them were added savings by the commissioners of his majesty's treasury, which were confirmed by the vote of parliament. But when they came to investigate the offices held under the exchequer, and proceeded to take into their consideration the nature of the tenure by which sinecure

See Vol. 31, p. 164.

places were held, they did not think fit entirely to lop them off. The tellers of the exchequer, and several other offices, were retained and recognized by the resolution of parliament as necessary to be continued. Such was the opinion of the right hon. gentleman who proposed the reform, and such were the sentiments even of some gentlemen whom I now see over against me. A considerable reduction was then also effected in different offices of the customs, while some were entirely dropped; and, with respect to subordinate employments, large additional savings were made. I have now to observe, that, in all these retrenchments, the House proceeded on the general and acknowledged principle of remuneration for public services which I have already stated; and of such weight was that principle, that even Mr. Burke himself, though animated with the most enthusiastic zeal to carry his plan into execution, was on every occasion ready to recognize not only the wisdom, but the necessity of adopting it. I maintain, Sir, that sinecure offices are given in the nature of a freehold tenure. Parliament has expressly said, they will respect them as freehold property: and if, in answer to this solemn declaration, it is urged, that parliament may rescind their former resolutions, I say they may, by a parity of reasoning, destroy every kind of property in the country. But to dwell any longer on this kind of argument would be too absurd to merit attention; and I have only to observe, that we ought not to lose sight, even for an instant, of those grand principles which lead to and are inseparable from the administration of public justice. It is my sincere and earnest wish, that the House should ascertain the particular offices which may be paid beyond the duties annexed to them, and beyond the responsibility which attaches to them. But until that great and necessary measure takes place, you cannot proceed to retrench or to lop off. The tendency of the motion is completely included in the instruction which I have given notice I should move for the direction of the committee, and it is brought forward at a moment when a general investigation is set on foot with respect to the whole finances of the country, and with a view of controlling the public expenditure. On these grounds I oppose the motion, and shall conclude with moving the previous question.

Mr. Sheridan said:—It is not possible to add much by way of argument to the proposition which is now before you, because nothing can, in my apprehension, be more clearly the duty of this House than to inquire whether some relief may not be afforded to the people by the abolition or retrenchment of sinecure places and pensions. Upon this proposition, however, clear as it is, the previous question has been moved. The leading features of the right hon. gentleman's speech tend to establish as a principle, that corruption in public affairs is adapted to the very nature of our constitution, and that public business cannot be carried on without it. He has reminded us of Mr. Burke's bill. That he calls a measure of confessed necessity; but he doubts whether the same necessity exists now, or rather he denies it. No man doubted the necessity then, and who are they who deny it now? Who will compare the situation of this country in 1780 with its situation now, and say that the necessity of retrenchment is not infinitely greater than it was then? The Bank of England had not stopped payment. The minister's proposition goes to this extent, that sinecures and places of great emolument ought to be held in this country; that to abolish them would be injurious to the public. I believe that something of this kind, but in a limited degree, was admitted at the time when Mr. Burke's bill passed. But, taking this qualified doctrine to be correct, will the minister deny, that since the passing of Mr. Burke's bill, places of great emolument and patronage have been created? that fees which were supposed to be abolished by that bill have been renewed? Have they not revived that which stood in the very front of that bill as an object of extinction, the office of third secretary of state? I say it has been proved that some of the things which were intended to be lopped off by that bill have been revived. I say the minister himself holds some things which ought to be lopped off. Does he deny it? What will he say of the seminary which was established for young statesmen? Will he tell exactly what his own fees are? and will he maintain that they are absolutely necessary, and that none of them are received by him, but for services rendered to the public?—At the time Mr. Burke's bill passed, it was meant that there should soon follow a regulation with respect to the forests and crown lands; but of them the minis-

ter had not said a single word that night. The minister may say, there are many offices that are not over paid. I verily believe there are. I pledge myself to show, that all the waste and prodigality which attends places, pensions, and abuses of various public offices, is so great, as to be sufficient to maintain with bread all the labouring poor of this country. I do not speak hastily and at random. I have information to proceed upon, for I have been in a situation in which I had an opportunity of examining into these matters. I hold a paper, that was put into my hand, that will tend to illustrate what I now say. It relates to an hon gentleman opposite (Mr. Rose). He is secretary to the Treasury, with a salary of 3,200*l.* a year; clerk of the parliament 4,000*l.*, master of the pleas, with another large salary, with several other offices, making in all upwards of 10,000*l.* a year. I am not denying the merit of that hon. gentleman; but when we are told that offices are paid on account of great and laborious duties, for God's sake let us understand the thing as it is: let us ask, whether all these offices, for instance, are performed by that hon. gentleman? and then let us ask ourselves, Whether there is any thing here that may with safety to the public be lopped off? Suppose we turn our eyes to the situation of the chancellor of the exchequer himself, I believe we shall find that he holds some that are not very laborious. Or if we take a view of the situation of a noble connexion of his (lord Grenville), who for a short time filled the chair of this House; he holds a great sinecure office, which was given him some time ago: and whatever may be his merits, it is certain that he has not earned that sinecure by a very long, or laborious employment in the public service. Instances after instances might be given of offices held, for which long and laborious services cannot be pleaded. I only mention these few, to show upon what foundation the minister rests his general assertion of the necessity of these things. The main question for the House to consider is this; is there, or is there not a general impression abroad that these things are grievous, and that by lopping many of them off the public may have considerable relief? I do not look to the relief which the public will have in a pecuniary sense by the reduction of useless places merely. I look also to the effect which that reduction will have: it will destroy that influence

which has contributed so much to our undoing. Had this been done before the war, we should not have had hundreds of millions added to our national debt; we should not have had to mourn over the hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of our fellow-creatures, whose lives have been sacrificed to carry it on. Such we see has been the effect of this war; and the control over these useless places has been one of the most powerful means by which ministers have been enabled to carry it on; and that is the point of view in which I consider these things calamitous to the country. The minister talks of the expectation of the public, as if he was perfectly at ease upon the matter. Does he reflect upon the impression he has made on the public mind by the bribery he has employed to gain votes in this House, in advising his majesty to make so lavish a distribution of the peerage? No fewer than 160 peers have been created since the commencement of the present administration. When we see the people suffering their burdens with such admirable patience, have we no reason to apprehend that they will reflect on these things? I once heard a member of this House say, that some persons were made peers who were not fitter for that honour than his groom; but, unfortunately for me I cannot call upon that gentleman to verify that fact here, for he is now made a peer himself. I understand there is another batch of peers about to be created; and from the names I have seen, no doubt, while opulence is deemed to be one of the requisites for that distinction, as I think it is, they may be very fit; but when, session after session, this practice is followed to keep up influence, what are the public to think? I am afraid their minds are made up upon the matter. Much reference has been had this night to the labours of Mr. Burke. I have read his "Thoughts on a Regicide Peace;" and although I detest the principle on which that, as well as many other of his works is founded, yet there is a sentiment in it which I think is founded in wisdom. He speaks of the necessity of raising the country to an eternal and vindictive war with France to restore monarchy. Let it be recollected, that, in recommending that to the country, he says, that it can only be done by the force of example. He adds, "As well may we fancy that the sea of itself will swell, and that without winds the billows will insult the adverse shore, as

that the gross mass of the people will be moved and elevated, and continue by a steady and permanent direction to bear upon one point, without the influence of superior authority, or superior mind." This observation I wish the House to bear in mind. We cannot reasonably call on the mass of the people to bear their disasters with patience, but from the pure example of men of superior minds and superior authority. If ever there was a moment in which the higher classes ought to show their love of the public good, unmixed with any wishes of their own advantage, it is the moment at which I am speaking. Instead of which, to the shame of government, and to the shame of this House, there is a general principle cherished which supports corruption to an unlimited extent. The minister has said, that he had it in contemplation to move instructions to the committee, which will answer all the beneficial purposes intended by this motion. It is a little remarkable that we never heard of these instructions before; and my hon. friend has given a pretty long notice of his intention to bring the subject forward.

Mr. *Rose* said:—I am beyond measure astonished at the assertions which I have heard this night respecting the employments which I have the honour to hold; after the formal and positive denial which I made three years ago to assertions of a similar nature. If the hon. gentleman was not inclined at that time to take my word for the truth of my declarations, he could at least have made inquiry. Of the offices which he has enumerated as being under my direction, three I do not hold, two I have not held for a considerable time, and one I never held. The income of one is much less than he has stated, and the income of the other two is monstrously exaggerated. One of them I acquired by a grant from the crown, in a way which was open to me in consequence of an address from the House of Lords; and I wish to know whether it be less honourable in me to possess a sinecure place than it was in the right hon. gentleman opposite, who, during the time he was in administration, held three sinecure places? In regard to the secretaryship of the treasury the hon. gentleman had greatly exaggerated the income. It is 3,500*l.* a year, and before I came into the office, it was 5,000*l.* a year. But when I came in, I told the lords commissioners that I conceived it improper to let the

profits of such a situation fluctuate in peace and war, and I accordingly fixed them below the lowest peace establishment. I do not complain that I am not fully rewarded for my service, for heaven knows I think I am rewarded well enough, though I certainly receive near 2,000*l.* a year less than my predecessor.—Now, Sir, in regard to the declaration of the hon. gentleman, that the additions to the public establishments are greater than they were before the reduction made by Mr. Burke's bill, that I deny; and I shall soon be able to come to issue with the hon. gentleman about it, as it is now likely soon to be tried. As to salaries, they are in general below the value of the services for which they are performed. I remember a time, however, when the hon. gentleman was averse to such grovelling and petty measures, as he termed them.—I shall beg leave to reply to a few observations of the hon. mover. There is a collector of fees, as the hon. gentleman stated but the fees are applied as the law intended them. The hon. gentleman stated, that the commissioners of the navy had 1,000*l.* a year each. I believe they have but 700*l.* Some addition has lately been made to their salaries—and for what purpose? Formerly, the provisions for the navy were supplied by agents and contractors, the friends of the minister in the House of Commons, or by some of their connexions at a great expense: and this mode of giving contracts was similar to the disposal of loans and lottery tickets for the purchase of ministerial support. Now, the whole is transacted by the boards, in consequence of the addition to their salaries; and I leave to the House to judge, whether the expense be greater than when the abuses I before mentioned were practised, to the amount of 80,000*l.* advantage to private individuals. In regard to the sinecures in the navy-office, the hon. gentleman is misinformed. All who receive pay do duty. The transport office is a new board, which was absolutely necessary for the benefit and expedition of that branch of service; and the establishment consists of five commissioners with 1,000*l.* a year each. Inquiry should precede determination. At present the House is uninformed of the number and expenditure of public offices; and it would be highly improper to ground that upon assertion, which should be demonstrated by proof. For my own part, I wish for a thorough investigation into the

number and value of all the public offices. But I hope the House will not be made a party in the delusive opinion, that it is necessary to go into an abolition of the greater branches of public expenditure, nor to adopt the partial and unprofitable plan which was formerly suggested, of taxing places and pensions; because I am well aware, neither the abolition nor the tax would produce what is supposed. The House, I trust, will see the object of the hon. gentleman, and see how far it is prudent or politic to promote it. There can be no more solid reason for taxing the income of a public man, than for taxing the income of any other individual, since none of them are paid for more than what the same abilities and attention are actually worth. Gentlemen ought to be cautious too; for it may be difficult to define where such a principle, if once admitted, would end. By the act of queen Anne, when the war required great and unusual exertions, the tax on incomes was not confined to public offices, but it extended to lawyers and physicians, and the stewards of manors also. In fact, it is just as unfair to tax the salary of any person in a public office, as it would be to tax the peculiar property of any individual. The pay which I receive for my public services and public labour is as much my legal claim and legal right as any other claim or right whatever. I feel no difficulty in stating this principle, and I have no doubt but it will be admitted, since no man, I believe, has ventured to dispute the right and title of the right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Fox) to that reversion which he received as a grant from his noble ancestor, and which was the subject of some conversation when a similar question was discussed three years ago.

Mr. *Sheridan* did not mean to say any thing harsh against the hon. gentleman. He was a man of great application and industry. He had stated facts as he understood them to be; but that hon. gentleman had not informed the House of the total amount of his income. He admitted that services ought to be well paid for, but he contended that large sums should not be given under the title of rewards for services, when in fact nothing was done for them. Now the hon. gentleman was clerk of the House of Lords, for which he did nothing. The office was a very laborious one, but it was performed by Mr. Cowper. He would ask the hon. gentleman, whether he had not secured

the reversion of that place to his own relation for no service whatever? With respect to the address of the House of Lords, he understood that that address did not specify that the hon. gentleman was a person to fill the office, although he had the good fortune to obtain it.

Mr. *Rose* said, it was an address of the Lords for appointing him to that office by name for services rendered. Whether those services deserved that reward was another question.

Mr. *Windham* (secretary at war) condemned the gross error and monstrous principles in which the motion was founded, and rose to reply, not only to general observations, but to some which required an explanation concerning the office which he held. He considered the reply of his right hon. friend to be so satisfactory and conclusive on the general statement, to all who heard him, that it seemed to require a confidence of a different sort to that which his right hon. friend solicited, to embolden any one to contest about it longer. It had been said, that his right hon. friend had now avowed and brought forward his system and opinions of corruption when that system and those opinions had not only been recognized by general principles, by every well regulated government, and by the ancient forms and customs of this country, but had been recognized by the conduct of parliament also. On that memorable occasion, in the year 1780 and afterwards in 1782, the principle was recognized by the most solemn and authoritative judgment of the House. The illustrious gentleman (Mr. Burke), whose clear and comprehensive mind surveyed, dissected, arranged, examined, and new modelled the system of the public expenditure, acted upon a large, liberal, sound, and statesman-like foundation. He did not shift and accommodate himself to that sort of doctrine which might attract the breath of a certain description of persons out of doors, by raising an idle clamour against sinecure places, but, convinced that retributions should be proportionate to services, and that a youth of distress and labour deserved an age of affluence and ease, he provided accordingly. Such were the opinions, and such was the system of those very persons with whom the hon. gentleman opposite had once associated, and with whom, without any disparagement to them, it might be their pride and boast to have acted.—The hon. gentleman had laboured very hard to re-

present that the country called for strong exertions; and what was the judgment which he gave upon it? Why it went to fasten the necessity of abolishing every sinecure place; or, in other words, of destroying public confidence; of depriving the useful and the brave of their remuneration; and of preventing people in future from being so prompt and vigorous as they otherwise might be, on account of the insecurity or improbability of obtaining any recompense. Gentlemen ought to recollect where they were when they argued in that manner, and talk like statesmen in parliament, and not as if they were haranguing a club at a public-house. Let them learn to suit their opinions to their situation, and not to cut off all rewards, and thereby force the people who pursue the common traffic of life to find a market for their zeal in other places. To what dilemma did they wish to bring the country! They would deprive the public of the assistance of all who are in office by robbing them of their pay—and for what? That those who are out of office might leave them in the lurch, or be invited to receive it! Such a jest might serve to set “some barren spectators on a roar,” but it was too contemptible for serious argument: for what was the plain issue of it, but that persons, whose long and able services were entitled to remuneration and reward, were to be cut down and impoverished; all men were to rank on the same level; there were to be no means of enrichment, no credit to the country, no chance in the common lottery of life, no change in the course and progress of events, but the same blank, the same uninteresting scene prevail for ever. Did they wish, then, that none should serve the public but men of fortune? Grant it. Have men of fortune always the abilities to serve the public, or even if they have, will they also have the inclination? Would the hon. gentleman who brought forward the motion, “I do not ask him at present,” said Mr. Windham, “but would he choose from a strict sense of duty, a love of employment, or a love of power, to quit his native fields, to leave the ease and comforts of retirement, to abjure the luxuries of life, and forsake the smiles of his family, for the trouble, hazard, and fatigue of a public employment, without honour, without profit, and without praise.” Would the House adopt a principle which excluded from public employment all men, whatever talents they

might possess, unless they happened to be men of fortune? We had instances, indeed, and very splendid ones, of men of fortune going through the fatigues of business, but he apprehended it would be but indifferent policy to rely upon them altogether. Would the hon. gentleman who made this motion take an office without expecting the emolument of it; his own for instance? Would he call for the emoluments of the office, or would he give them up? He did not expect his answer now; but he apprehended it would not be difficult to guess at his answer at a convenient season. Why, then, carp so much at the emoluments of office?—These being the principles and grounds of the opinion of a necessity of retrenchment in the public offices, as stated to the House by the hon. gentleman and his friends, might the House rely upon their integrity that they would not push them farther? Allow that they did not, it would be difficult, perhaps, to fix the precise boundary; and then it might be necessary also to inquire what changes might ensue, and where the House should desist from pressing this regulation. But a new case occurs, which must be shown. The hon. gentleman stated, that a great deal of patronage had been growing up since the last regulation. For the sake of argument, admit it, and admit too, that the House in conformity were inclined to renew the measure. Well, what then? Is it not necessary first to inquire, whether the establishments grow out of the necessity of public service, whether there be not a better execution by the increase, than could be balanced by the diminution; or whether there might not be pre-existing cases which require such an extension? If any of these cases bear out the propriety of their continuance, what then is the House to do? Why, then the House is to inquire whether they be rightly arranged or not. If they are all right, useful, and expedient, it must be wise and prudent to preserve them as they are: if they are wrong, useless, or obstructive, then they ought to be abolished, or reformed.—To come now to the other topic which was brought into bail, the calamities of the times. Instead of differing from the hon. gentleman on the other side, he should go beyond them. He should go beyond them in deploring the calamities, but he should differ from them as to their causes, their nature, and their remedies. He did not deplore the obstruction

of commerce, the decay of manufactures, the loss of resources, and the total annihilation of national wealth; because he was well assured that the country was yet full of wealth, that it possessed the means of riches, that it could speedily revive its credit, and display the same irresistible energy which had distinguished it for ages. But it was the prevalence of that destructive system, the gigantic strides of that unnatural power, whose whole conduct contributed to effect an extent of territory too vast for the huge hand of ambition to control. It was that extraordinary and astonishing creature, which grew more terrible from contention, that caused all his sorrow. This was the danger our country had to dread; and what resources, what remedy, what fund was to provide against it? A few miserable savings and scrapings, the odds and ends of candles, cheese-parings, and tattered rags and remnants, "a thing made up of shreds and patches," this was to be our resource! If there really was a wasteful and idle expenditure, they should meet it fairly, probe it to the bottom, and come to some manly regulation on the subject, but they should not practise so mean and so shabby a delusion upon the public, as to hold up the savings of a few sinecure places as a resource to lessen the public burthens; for he verily believed, that the fee simple of all such savings would not amount to a farthing a head to all the inhabitants of London. It was by holding up as a great resource for the public, this system of pitiful economy, that the discontented spirits of this country were emboldened; while the good effects to be expected, were but ridiculous and idle dreams. If ministers had conducted the war improperly, let the House say so, and impeach them at once; but this was not the way to redress the grievances of the public, if they had any to complain of; on the contrary, it led directly to the greatest mischief; for by attacking the property of a placeman, they attacked all species of property. Those who thought that a placeman ought to be stripped, would soon be brought to think every man who had any wealth ought to be stripped also. Nay, he thought that, according to the mode of reason adopted against placemen, he should make a better figure in endeavouring to defend the emoluments of his place, than in the character of a country gentleman, he could defend his right to his estate; since for the emolu-

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ments of his place, he might say he did something, whereas his estate descended to him without any merit of his own. Let men, with large masses of property, be cautious, therefore, how they act in aiding such opinions; for there is a close connexion in reason, and, depend upon it, a still closer one, in fact, between the clamour against public offices and the confiscation of private property. The principle had been recognized and acted upon in another country. What service does a man do for his estate? Of the two species of property, the place is the most secure, because the labourer is supposed to be worthy of hire; and as the estate might originate in abuse of power, or servility to a prince, an allegation might be made, that the possessor and his family had enjoyed the profits of it long enough, and that it was now high time to revert to the other claimants. He supported the necessity of sinecures as a provision for old age, talents, and public services. He contended, that the doctrines upon which the motion was supported, were only adapted to enflame the poor, and to purchase mouth honour and unworthy popularity.—As to the general argument of corruption in this war, he could only say, that if it was carried on by corruption, it was the corruption of the greater part of Europe against a single enemy; and he could not conceive why so large a part of mankind should delight in corrupting themselves to the manifest prejudice of their interests. Those who could lay that flattering unction to their souls for having opposed that principle, were such strange men, that he could not argue with them. He then justified the conduct of the department over which he presided, maintained that there was nothing there which required retrenchment, and declared he believed that would turn out to be the case in every other branch of the public expenditure; all which, however, would appear from the report of the committee in consequence of the instruction which his right hon. friend had given notice of his intention to move. He concluded in giving his cordial assent to the motion for the previous question.

Mr. *Pollen* thought, that, at the present moment of embarrassment, every possible means of saving ought to be adopted. The point now before the House was, not whether a committee of inquiry ought to be appointed or not; for upon this there seemed to be no dif-

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ference of opinion, but whether the duty of inquiry ought to be assigned to the committee which was ballotted for on this day, or to another committee? As that committee had been chosen in the fairest possible way, he could see no objections to its being the instrument of inquiry, and therefore he should vote for the previous question.

Mr. *Bastard* expressed his astonishment at the sentiments contained in the speech of the secretary at war. His arguments seemed to him, to be calculated equally for the meridian of a despotism or of a republic, but they were by no means analogous to the spirit of the British constitution. Was all the extravagance in which ministers chose to indulge to be sanctioned upon the score of rights? and the fruits of that extravagance to be deemed as sacred as the tenure by which legal property was held? The right hon. gentleman argued upon the necessity of corruption under every government. But he contended, that it was this which constituted the difference between a mixed and simple form of government—that a government such as that of England, could be administered without corruption, whereas neither a republic, nor an absolute monarchy could. His argument went to cover all the shameful prodigality of ministers. He trusted, however, that the House would not be deluded by such modes of reasoning. Public credit had sustained a severe shock, and it could only be re-established by a renewal of public confidence, to which nothing could contribute more than the House of Commons showing their constituents that they were not influenced by any selfish or sinister motives, but were actuated only by zeal for the prosperity and welfare of the country.

Mr. Serjeant *Adair* said, he was convinced that the public voice loudly called for inquiry; that the people had a right to expect it; and that they would not be satisfied without it. A good deal had been done in former times in the way of sacrifice, and he could not take upon himself to say, whether a good deal more might not be done in that way. It was certainly, however, a very fit subject for inquiry. At a time like this there was no saving, however little, which, if just and practicable, ought not to be adopted; and, if there was any ground for it, he hoped that inquiry would be followed up by retrenchment. He should vote for an

inquiry then, upon two grounds, in the first place, to see whether or not some saving might not arise to the public; and secondly, because it would be the only effectual way of removing a delusion (and a most complete delusion he believed it to be) from the mind of the people, that the salaries and fees of office contributed greatly to the extent of the public burthens. He should therefore have acquiesced in the original motion, had it not been expressed in terms which were rather exceptionable; because it took for granted, what could only be properly the result of fair and candid inquiry, and had he not also been of opinion that the object of inquiry would be much better attained in the mode proposed by the chancellor of the exchequer to instruct the committee charged with the investigation of the state of the public finances, to comprehend this department in the sphere of its inquiries. He should, upon these grounds, vote for the previous question.

Mr. *Fox* said, that having been personally alluded to in the course of the debate, and challenged to vindicate his consistency in supporting the present motion, with his conduct in 1782, he found himself called upon to make a few observations in his own defence. There were also a few general positions which the secretary at war had laid down, on which he wished to make some remarks. The right hon. gentleman reprobated, in strong terms, the expedient of having recourse to the property of private individuals in time of public calamity. He admitted the principle in its full extent, and agreed with him, that any encroachment upon the rights of private property under pretence of public necessity, led to nothing short of a system of universal plunder and depredation. But, in the name of God, how was this general principle applicable to the present case? He had almost imagined that the right hon. gentleman was answering a speech containing some proposition to rob the duke of Bedford of the property which his ancestors had received from Henry 8th, or to despoil the duke of Grafton or the duke of Richmond of the possessions which their forefathers had received from Charles 2nd. The right hon. gentleman contended, that he had as good, or a better title to his salary as secretary at war, than he had to the rents of his paternal estates. This, Mr. *Fox* said, he would not admit; for if a motion was made in that House to address his

majesty to remove the right hon. gentleman from his counsels—a motion for which he would certainly vote—it could not be argued, that he was guilty of the same injustice as if he addressed his majesty to deprive him of his landed property. And if the principle did not apply to his removal from office, it could not be applicable to a diminution of the income belonging to that office. There was no connexion, then, between the general principle, and the instance to which it was attempted to be applied. The question was, whether, in the present calamitous state of the country, the emoluments of offices of every description ought not to be retrenched as much as possible for the good of the public? Upon this statement of the question, there was but little difficulty. But it was said, that he could not accede to the present proposition, because in 1782 he was as much pledged not to go farther than the limits of Mr. Burke's bill, as he was pledged to go that length. He asked the right hon. gentleman whether he recollected the contents of Mr. Burke's bill? Was there not something in it about exchequer offices and crown lands? But it was well known, that it never had its full effect, and that the plan, on account of the short duration of what was commonly called the coalition administration, was only partially executed. But supposing, for a moment, that it had been executed up to the full intention of its authors, was no allowance to be made for a change of times and circumstances? Had not a greater portion of influence been since created than was then destroyed? And if it was urged, that new offices were occasioned by the necessities of the times, why were not offices that were less necessary abolished in proportion to the new ones that were created? The right hon. gentleman asserted, that, as a pecuniary resource, all the saving which would arise from any retrenchment that could be made would be extremely trifling. The saving arising from Mr. Burke's bill also was trifling in amount. But the advantage was not to be calculated by merely a sum of 1,000*l.*, or 100,000*l.*, which might be directly saved. It ought to be recollected, that it might be the means of saving many millions to the public, and of preserving not only the independence of the House of Commons, but the independence of the country. The right hon. gentleman did not dispute the calamitous state of the country, but he looked at only

one side of the calamity; he only looked at the extension of the French territory, forgetting altogether the situation of its internal credit. He forgot that it was the means of influence which were in the hands of ministers that had contributed to the enormous territorial aggrandizement of France; that had it not been for this influence, the republic of France would not have had Brabant, would not have had Italy, and that the right hon. gentleman would not now have had reason to lament the extent of her dominions. To prove that ministerial influence obtained in the House of Commons, Mr. Fox appealed to the authority of Mr. Burke, in that passage of his "*Letters on a Regicide Peace*" where he intimates a suspicion, that the minority in the House of Commons express the sense of the majority of the country.* And to what was this to be ascribed? Was it not to the places, pensions, commissions, and all the various kinds of patronage of which ministers were in possession? It had been asked, whether he supposed that there were no other principles of public conduct but those that were founded upon corruption? He admitted that there were gentlemen who acted upon totally different principles; but he contended, that this was a very general and very powerful spring of action. This was a topic nearly connected with the exchequer offices, which, in his opinion, at the death of the present incumbents, ought to be entirely abolished. If he was asked, how he had come to change his opinion upon this subject since 1782, he would answer that it was one of those topics on which a man might alter his sentiments without deserting any general principle. Indeed, there were arrangements which ought to be regulated so much by the circumstances of the times, that he should have no objection that an inquiry of the nature now proposed should take place every ten or twelve years. When he heard of the splendour necessary to a court, and of the dignity which it was proper to support in high situations, he was ready to acknowledge, that in certain circumstances that splendour and that dignity might be proper and becoming: but in times such as these, when public credit was fallen, when commerce was fast decaying, and when the nation were groaning under a

* See Burke's Works, Vol. 8, p. 137, 8vo. Edit. 1808.

load of taxes which they were scarcely able to support, then they became insults upon the people; and in order to maintain authority, instead of affecting gaiety and ease, the rulers of the nation ought to manifest the same symptoms of mortification and distress which pervaded the community. The right hon. gentleman contended, that the idea of retrenchment was a vulgar error, and that pensions were bestowed as the reward of merit. If it was a vulgar error, the vulgar ought to be undeceived; and with respect to pensions being given as the reward of merit, he would appeal for the refutation of the doctrine to the history of modern times, where the right hon. gentleman would find that they had been bestowed upon men merely on account of their subserviency to a faction, of which the right hon. gentleman once held the same opinion that he (Mr. Fox) still entertained of them. Mr. Fox here adverted to the sinecures of Mr. Pitt and lord Grenville, with which they had provided themselves when they were loading the people with an accumulated weight of burthens: and also to the arrangement in the secretary of state's office, by which Mr. Aust was removed from the situation he there held, though he was eminently qualified for holding it, and at a time of life when he was as fit for business as ever he had been, merely to provide for Mr. Canning, who could not do the business of the office till he was instructed in it by Mr. Aust.

Mr. Fox then proceeded to a topic a little more difficult and nice. The right hon. gentleman had appealed to him, Whether he believed that his conduct was influenced by corrupt motives? He certainly believed that his conduct, as well as the conduct of those with whom he had been accustomed to act, was influenced by motives very different from those of venality, but he confessed that it had been such as strongly to induce suspicion of their motives, and that the world would not, perhaps, give them so much credit for honesty as he did. He here referred to a sentiment in one of Mr. Burke's publications, in which he states, that when men swerve from those principles upon which they used to act, and leave those parties to which they were formerly attached, they often deceive themselves respecting their motives, and when they fall into a state of the lowest insignificance they sometimes flatter themselves that

they never stood on so high ground. Were he now to state his opinion of his noble friend (lord W. Russell) who had been referred to in the course of the debate, of his clear consistency of character, of his high and nice sense of honour, and above all, of his steadiness of character, and even were he to be asked, whether he had not at one time as high an opinion of others from whom he now differed, he would answer, certainly he had: nor would he be more surprised at any change in the sentiments of his noble friend than he had been at the difference of sentiments between the author of the work, intituled "The Causes of the present Discontents," and of those who signed the resolutions of 1784, and the opinions which they at present professed to hold. A distrust of public men was one among others of the lamentable effects of the present war.

The right hon. gentleman had said, that the labourer was worthy of his hire, and that the servants of the public were not overpaid. He had no objection to the servants of the public being handsomely rewarded; nay, he for one would go so far as to say, that wherever a man had a legal right to a place, however that right was acquired, he should not be for disturbing him in the possession of it. But if the labourer was to be paid, why did not Mr. Cowper, who did the duty, receive the salary of clerk to the House of Lords? Why did an hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Rose), receive the salary, and, as if it were not enough, secure the reversion to his son? It was most scandalous and enormous! When he said this, however, if he had got a legal grant of it, he would not deprive him of it. All he wanted was, that the reversions should be saved to the public. Mr. Fox said, he did not approve of the mode of assigning the inquiry to a committee already balloted for. But even supposing that it was to be referred to this committee, was that any reason why the House should not agree to the proposition of his hon. friend? They would then be pledged to the country to make retrenchments wherever they could, consistently with the public interest and the public honour. But, in plain language, the chancellor of the exchequer wished that it should rather be done by him than by the House of Commons, in the same way that he had insisted, that when advances were to be made to the bank, it should be done at his own instance, and not upon a resolution of that

House. Good God! had not the House even yet had enough of his measures? If they were not yet tired of them, they might make trial of a few more. The right hon. gentleman was afraid that the proposition would delude the public. But he would put it to the House, whether the public were more likely to be deluded by an open discussion of the subject, or by a committee which was appointed by the man who had spent his whole life in delusion. To delude them into an expense of seven or eight millions was nothing: but to lead them to hope for a little saving in the public expenditure would be an incurable evil! Mr. Fox warned the House against the influence of such argument, and against leaving the inquiry to the committee which had been ballotted; for, though he did not know the members who composed the committee, he knew that if it was formed by the minister, it was formed for the purpose of delusion.

Mr. *Rose*, in consequence of the word "scandalous," which Mr. Fox had applied to him in respect to the reversion of clerk to the House of Lords, said that he deemed it no more scandalous in him to obtain that reversion for his son, than it was in the father of Mr. Fox to obtain the reversion of two patent places for him: nor did he believe, there would be any thing more so in the mode by which that reversion might be disposed of, than there was in the way those reversions had been disposed of, by the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. *Fox* said, he did not know what the gentleman meant by alluding to his disposal of the reversions he had mentioned. The truth, he supposed, was, that the hon. gentleman meant to insinuate, that he had very imprudently dissipated them. This was not the first time, by many, that he had been reproached with dissipating his fortune. It was not, however, that the gentleman opposite felt the least displeasure at his having dissipated his fortune; they were only angry, that he had not been so mean as to resort to those measures to repair it, to which they themselves were so partial.

The *Speaker* was convinced the hon. gentlemen had mistaken each other. He was clear that Mr. Fox had never applied the word "scandalous" to any share Mr. *Rose* had in the transaction of the reversion; and equally so, that Mr. *Rose* never intended any thing personal to Mr. Fox

in the use of the same word; otherwise he should instantly have interposed.

Mr. *Canning*, conceiving that some reflections had been thrown on the way in which he came into the place, said, that the public had not been encumbered with an additional expense on his account. Mr. *Aust*, whom he succeeded, had been appointed to other offices more lucrative, but his appointment had added no new expense to the public burthens. If sordid views had been my object, (said Mr. C.) I would rather have accepted those offices which Mr. *Aust* now holds than the station I fill.

Mr. *Fox* did not wish to throw any imputation on the motives which induced Mr. *Canning* to accept his office; but the removal of Mr. *Aust* seemed to be a sort of job to make room for Mr. *Canning*.

Dr. *Laurence* cordially agreed in many of the general principles that had been laid down, respecting economical reform: they were principles he had long cherished; but he could not agree in all the principles of reform that had been advanced that night. The name of Mr. *Burke* had been introduced, and the pension he received had been made the subject of animadversion; but Mr. *Burke's* pension was the pride and the honour of his life. He disapproved of the motion, on the same grounds that Mr. *Burke* had in 1782, disapproved of motions respecting reform. It did not clearly point out the abuses complained of. While it professed to mean one thing, it was calculated to impress an opinion of another. While it professed to aim at public economy, it might give rise to the idea of defects in our constitution. It was to stop this delusion, and to lead the people from dangerous innovations to wholesome reforms, that Mr. *Burke* had brought forward his bill in 1782. He made a specific motion, and fully explained the whole of his plan. The public could not be deluded by Mr. *Burke's* proceedings. He wished the present motion was equally explicit. He denied that the influence of the crown enabled ministers to involve the country in the war.

Mr. *Fox* said, he should consider it as a reproach to him not to be well read in Mr. *Burke's* writings, and believed himself incapable of misquoting him, either through negligence or design. He argued from Mr. *Burke's* works, not so much that he had deserted his former friends, as that he had associated with,

and supported an administration constituted, constituted on principles directly opposite to those maintained in most of Mr. Burke's writings.

Mr. *Tierney* said, that the object for which the finance committee was instituted, and the object of the present motion were very different. One committee of gentlemen might be very well qualified to inquire into dry matters of finance, and yet they might be unfit persons to decide on what savings could be made in abolishing useless places and pensions. This difficulty appeared the greater to him, as he understood from rumour (a wicked and false report perhaps), that two gentlemen were on the committee, who enjoyed a divided office (Messrs. Steele and Ryder, joint paymasters), and surely they were not the best men to make savings by abolishing useless offices. If he voted for such men to be members of such a committee, he would expect to be told he was laughing at his constituents. He congratulated Mr. Pitt on the plausible course he had taken, by referring the motion to that committee, and made no doubt the right hon. gentleman would soon again take his old friend parliamentary reform by the hand. The previous question being put, That that question be now put: the House divided.

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. St. John	-	-	-	}	77
		Mr. Tierney	-	-	-		
NOES	{	Mr. Canning	-	-	-	}	169
		Mr. Sargent	-	-	-		

So it passed in the negative.

Debate on the Earl of Albemarle's Motion relative to the Invasion of Ireland.
March 16. The Earl of *Albemarle* rose to make the motion of which he had given notice. He assured the House, that he did not mean to offer, or even to hint, the smallest disrespect, to any of the gallant officers employed in our fleets, or to the admiralty. The only object he had in view was inquiry. The opinion was almost universal that considerable blame lay somewhere. It was only necessary for him to remind their lordships, that ministers must have been informed, long before the meeting of parliament, that an invasion of either this country or Ireland, or both, was meditated by the enemy. How came it, then, that no fleet of ours was stationed on the coast of Ireland for its protection? This question was a very

important one. In order to form a just opinion whether the admiralty were right in what they had done, it would be necessary to enter upon a review of the whole circumstances. In the month of September, it was pretty generally known, that an armament of considerable extent, was going forward at Brest. Early in October, a fleet, under the command of admiral Colpoys, was stationed off Brest harbour, for the purpose of watching the motions of the enemy. From this time to the time of their sailing, that gallant admiral had remained on that station; and he had no doubt that, during his stay there, and from the time he quitted the station to his arrival in port, he would be able to give the most satisfactory reasons for his conduct. The French armament left Brest under cover of a heavy fog on the 16th of December, and on the 18th arrived off the coast of Ireland. Some of them cast anchor in Bantry Bay, and remained there till the 6th of January. Owing to adverse winds and stormy weather, which dispersed the greatest part of their fleet, they were not able to effect a landing; if they had, with only a force of 5 or 6,000 men, from the then situation of the internal force of Ireland, there was every reason to believe that Cork, with all its stores and provisions, must have fallen into the hands of the enemy. At all events, the facts show, that the French fleet consisting of 18 sail of the line, several frigates, and numerous transports, all full of troops, actually sailed from Brest, anchored in Bantry Bay, remained there, some of them during a period of eleven or twelve days, and afterwards with very inconsiderable loss, all of which was owing to storms and tempests, returned to their own ports without falling in with a single ship of the British navy to impede or molest them. On the 20th, news arrived in England of the French fleet having left Brest. On the 22d, orders were sent to lord Bridport to sail immediately with the fleet under his command; and, by a letter from his lordship to the admiralty, it appeared, that lord Bridport could not sail till the 25th, on account of some of the ships of his squadron not being ready. On the evening of the 25th, however, he dropped down to St. Helen's; but in doing so, the *Sans Pareil* and *Prince* ran foul of each other, and one of them was so much damaged that she could not proceed. Lord Bridport was therefore delayed still farther, and did

not sail till the 29th or 30th. At that time, however, he sailed with 17 sail of the line and some frigates, and proceeded directly for Ireland. He arrived with his squadron at Bantry Bay on the 8th of January, two days after the French had left it; and after cruising in quest of them for several days, he finally returned to port, without having seen a single ship of the enemy. He had no doubt of the great anxiety of lord Bridport to sail as speedily as possible. He had been told, however, that our fleet was never known to have sailed under so little sail as it had done on that occasion. Another thing which appeared very extraordinary to him was, that after the noble admiral found the whole of the enemy's fleet had left that coast, he still continued cruising off Bantry Bay during a day and a half, before he proceeded any where else in quest of them. It here struck him as extremely negligent and blameable, that after ministers had so long been informed of this intended armament at Brest, the fleet under lord Bridport should not have been more numerous and all ready, so as to have avoided any necessity of waiting in consequence of an accident having happened to two of his ships. In the next place, there appeared to be great blame in the fleet, such as it was, in point of numbers, being on the 22d of December so far from ready, that it actually could not sail till the 25th. Surely it ought to have been ready to sail at an hour's notice.—He then adverted to the situation of the fleet under admiral Colpoys; many of whose ships were in great want of those essential articles on shipboard, water and fuel. When the fog cleared away, and admiral Colpoys discovered that the French armament had sailed, he immediately sailed, with his squadron for the Lizard, as the most likely place to gain intelligence of the enemy; but when he came thither, he found several of his ships so much in want of necessaries, and the weather such, that he could not provide them from others; and after sending away first one, and then another, he found it most adviseable to return with the whole. And he actually arrived in port on the very day that lord Bridport sailed. It appeared to him very strange that lord Bridport had not, much sooner than the 22d of December, been ordered out with a fleet sufficient to have replaced all those ships under admiral Colpoys, which were in want of necessaries, and taking the remainder under his com-

mand, to have continued on that station, while other ships were sent out to him as they could have been got ready. It was clear from the whole face of the transactions that had passed, that if admiral Colpoys had found his fleet in a suitable condition to have proceeded directly to Ireland, he must have fallen in with the French; and what account he would have given of them in such an event, nobody would be at a loss to guess. Had lord Bridport sailed, even with nine ships of the line, when he first received orders so to do, nothing could have prevented his falling in with a very great part of the enemy's fleet, and thereby totally annihilating their hopes of a successful invasion. This opportunity of humbling the pride and power of an enterprising enemy had, most undoubtedly, been lost by misconduct in some department or other. He had lastly to advert to the conduct of the fleet under admiral Elphinstone, who, instead of joining some of the squadrons then at sea, with the *Magnanime* and the other ships under his command, came to St. Helen's on the very day that lord Bridport put to sea. He concluded with expressing his firm persuasion, that the facts to which he had alluded, were amply sufficient to induce their lordships to enter on the inquiry. He should therefore move, "That this House do resolve itself into a committee, to inquire into the measures taken for the protection of Ireland, by a naval force upon the late attempted invasion."

Earl *Spencer* rose, to vindicate the conduct of the Admiralty. It certainly was fairly to be expected of a government which had secret service money at its command, that it should obtain, by means of its agents, information to which the public had not access. Every noble lord, however, must be sensible, that it was impossible at all times to obtain correct information respecting the plans and designs of an enemy. A government might sometimes have too much as well as too little information, and when, from different quarters they got different intelligence, it became a matter of uncertainty how they ought to act. In the present instance, he was convinced the Admiralty had acted in the best manner possible, upon the information which they had. With respect to admiral Colpoys' squadron being so long at sea, he confessed he was friendly to the system of making fleets frequently change their

station. In the present case, however, the squadron under the command of that gallant admiral had been kept out of port longer than usual, in consequence of sir Roger Curtis, who had gone in quest of admiral Richery, and who was to succeed admiral Colpoys on the Brest station, arriving a fortnight later in port than was expected. He affirmed, however, that that fleet was not forced to come into port by a want of necessaries, but that it was driven up the channel by tempestuous weather. Water they certainly had not in very great abundance; but the Powerful had less in proportion than any other ship, not from having distributed part of her store to the rest of the fleet, but from having used a greater quantity than was common. After the French fleet had eluded the vigilance of admiral Colpoys, that gallant officer adopted the wisest course which it was possible for him to take. He repaired off the Lizard Point, finding, that from the tempestuousness of the weather, that he could not remain off Brest; and this new situation was certainly the station in which he was most likely either to receive intelligence of the enemy, or to receive farther orders from the Admiralty. Even here, however, he could not keep his station, and was obliged to come into the nearest port.—Earl Spencer next proceeded to vindicate the conduct of the fleet under lord Bridport. As soon as the Admiralty received intelligence of the sailing of the French fleet, orders were sent to lord Bridport to prepare for sea with all possible expedition. The ships under his command, however, could not be got ready till the 25th of December, five days after the date of the order. This delay was occasioned by some of the ships of sir Roger Curtis' squadron, and which were to go out with lord Bridport, needing repair. As soon, however, as they were ready for sea, which was on the 25th, they dropped down to St. Helen's, and here the noble lord had asked why he did not proceed to sea with nine ships of the line, instead of waiting for the other six, which were to join him from Spithead. He assured the noble lord that it neither arose from the want of money to victual ships, the want of money to pay the men, a division among ministers, a misunderstanding between the port admiral and the admiral of the fleet, nor from a confusion of the telegraph signals; but that the noble admiral acted in obedience to his instruc-

tions, which were sent before the Admiralty knew the course which the French fleet had taken, and before they knew that admiral Colpoys had returned to port. Had the noble admiral known that at that moment there were seven ships of the enemy in Bantry Bay, he would not have hesitated a moment to put to sea if it had been practicable. His lordship then read extracts from several letters from sir Peter Parker, the port admiral at Spithead, the substance of which was, that the ships destined to join lord Bridport at St. Helen's, could not sail on account of the adverse winds. From all these circumstances, it so happened, that lord Bridport could not put to sea till the 3rd of January, and it so happened also, that the French fleet eluded his vigilance. He could by no means allow, however, that Ireland owed its safety to the winds; on the contrary, it was the winds, and the winds only, which prevented the French fleet from being destroyed, either by admiral Colpoys or lord Bridport. Having entered into this explanation, he was persuaded their lordships would consider the papers on their table, as superseding the necessity of any inquiry. He should therefore give his decided negative to the motion.

The Earl of *Carlisle* did not think that the selected documents on the table could communicate that satisfaction which was required. He lamented that ministers had not come forward with them sooner, and offered their explanations when it might have been possible to collect information from other sources, and especially when they had an opportunity of hearing what the noble lord (Bridport) who commanded the fleet, knew upon the subject. He wished to have it satisfactorily explained, why ministers, when they had information of the preparations made by the enemy, and the intended sailing of their fleet, had not provided a force under lord Bridport sufficiently strong to have been superior to the consequences of such accidents as had happened to the prince and Sans-Pareil. He thought it highly necessary likewise to know why it was four days before the fleet was ready to sail, after the news of the French fleet being at sea had arrived? Why had not ministers given admiral Colpoys specific orders to make Ireland the chief object of his regard? It was the duty of ministers to

watch over the safety of Ireland. When they knew that the designs of the enemy were pointed against it, they should have made it the object of their first care. Had they given such a positive order to admiral Colpoys, there would have been no occasion for any delay in lord Bridport's sailing, because in proceeding directly to Ireland with the force he could muster, he must have fallen in with some of admiral Colpoys' squadron, and then he would not only have been in no danger from any superiority of the enemy, but would have been able to have faced them with success. Even after admiral Colpoys' return, why were not such of his ships as were fit for service again sent out as soon as possible, to reinforce lord Bridport? But, besides these charges against ministers, why, when the emergency had actually occurred, had they not sooner made provision for what they were apprized was about to take place? The enemy's design of invasion was known before October: it was announced in the speech from the throne; and it was publicly said by ministers that the attempt was pointed against Ireland. With a navy of 124 ships of the line, why was not the force under lord Bridport much larger, and made independent of any accidental occurrence? Why were not the York and the Raisonnable, which were both in readiness, ordered to join, if the delay in lord Bridport's sailing was owing to his want of sufficient force? Last war, lord Sandwich had observed, that the naval minister who did not provide a force adequate to face the united fleets of France and Spain in the height of their power deserved to lose his head. On the present occasion, however, it was confessedly the remnant of the French naval power with which we had had to contend; and yet ministers had suffered it to brave our naval power, and to insult our coasts. He did not know how Portugal came to be considered as of equal importance to this country with Ireland, as the arrangements of ministers seemed to indicate. He confessed, that he could not recognize the justice of the principle, or the policy of the conduct. The orders for Admiral Colpoys to go to Ireland should have been positive. Nothing should have been left to conjecture. Even the conjectures of a person so distinguished for his skill and gallantry were not to be trusted in so momentous an affair. Had such orders been given to

admiral Colpoys, he was convinced that the fleet of the enemy would have been annihilated, an event which would have accelerated that peace so congenial to the wishes of all. Then we should not have seen that event which had made every man in the country hang his head, and which had raised that distrust which had gone abroad, of the conduct of our naval affairs. With regard to these important points, the papers upon the table left every thing as obscure as before. He should therefore vote for the committee proposed.

The Marquis of *Abercorn* said, that no person could have less personal animosity towards the noble earl at the head of the Admiralty than he himself had, for he had known and respected him from his earliest years. He did not think, however, that any considerations of personal regard ought to prevent any noble lord from speaking his sentiments freely on public occurrences; nor could the noble earl be offended that his public administration should be made the subject of parliamentary discussion. Upon several points he differed materially from the noble earl. In a war, in which failure had succeeded failure, it was the duty of parliament to inquire, and it was the interest of ministers, if their conduct was unexceptionable, that the investigation should take place. We were now in the fifth year of a war marked with reverses and misfortunes, in which plan after plan had miscarried. In the course of this unfortunate period our patience, to say no more, had kept pace with our disasters. Never had we been engaged in a war in which so many opportunities of acting with advantage, had in a manner pressed themselves upon ministers and been so ill improved. Not one of them had been seized with judgment, no vestige of profit from them now remained or could be traced. All the repulses, however, which this country had ever encountered, sunk before the disgraceful attempt with which Ireland had been threatened and insulted, with impunity. He did not say that ministers were to blame in this affair, for it was not his habit, to prejudge, but if ever there was subject for inquiry it was this. The ministers had been in possession of intelligence of the designs of the enemy previous to October, and it was their duty not to have trusted the safety of Ireland to the chance of winds and waves. It was their duty to have prepared for its defence, and

to have arranged the force and distribution of their fleets, with a view to that enterprise which they knew would be attempted. Ireland was the principal object which the view of this subject presented. Upon this head, however, he felt himself entangled and perplexed. Were he to explain himself fully he should surprise their lordships. But he never wished to say more than caution dictated. Was it not an aggravation of the blame, that upon this naval defence alone the safety of Ireland was staked. To place it in a state of internal preparation no exertion had been made. To call this a most criminal neglect, was to give it the softest term. It was a neglect by which ministers had trifled with that important stake which this country had in the fate of Ireland, with that union of mutual interest inseparable as that of soul and body; a neglect by which they had trifled with the property of thousands and the happiness of millions, by which they had put to hazard the brightest jewel in the British diadem.—With regard to the papers produced, he did not think they proved much in favour of ministers. To establish the justification of ministers they ought to have proved four points; that this country had a sufficient fleet ready for sea: that admiral Colpoys' fleet was sufficiently strong to keep the sea; that he was sufficiently provided with stores, &c.; and that he had received particular orders to turn his attention to Ireland, and to proceed there as soon as he had received intelligence that the French fleet had sailed. None of these points appeared from the papers. On the contrary, it was proved, that admiral Colpoys' fleet had been too long at sea, that he was not sufficiently provided with stores, and provisions, and, above all, that no particular attention had been paid to Ireland, nor any positive orders given to admiral Colpoys to make its safety his principal object. Under such circumstances he must vote for the inquiry.

Earl *Spencer* said, that if the motion was carried, he should consider it neither more nor less than a censure on the admiralty-board, a return which that board little merited, as every precaution had been taken to prevent the unfortunate circumstances that had occurred. Ever since he had been in office, he had made the utmost exertions to farther the public service, and such exertions he should most unremittingly continue: but he pretended only to mortal powers, and whenever any man

should feel himself confident enough to undertake to contend against winds and waves, to govern the elements, and command the tides and seasons, he certainly would not have the arrogance to hold his situation one moment longer.

The Earl of *Moir* said, that the generosity of the noble earl had involved and perplexed his own defence. He had combined with his own defence the impracticable attempt of likewise clearing his colleagues. The real point he considered to be, why admiral Colpoys had not received orders to proceed to Ireland, as soon as he received information that the French fleet had sailed? To this no satisfactory answer had been given. He was convinced, that admiral Colpoys' squadron was fully equal to that of the enemy; and all who knew that officer must regret that fortune had prevented him from obtaining that brilliant triumph which an opportunity of engaging the enemy would have afforded. The noble earl had contended, that, from the mass of intelligence which ministers received, it was impossible to decide upon the real object of the enemy's expedition. But did not the noble earl know, that it was the province of talents and ability to deduce causes and consequences from the materials with which they might be furnished, and that on such occasions only true sagacity was to be discovered? Ministers were in possession of intelligence, and he was beyond measure surprised that they had not acted upon it. He had been at Dublin when the preparations of the enemy were going on, and the arms, stores, &c. with which they were provided, demonstrated the real point of their destination. That their design was to furnish the discontented in Ireland with arms was evident. That their plan would prove abortive, was to be hoped, and that though they had effected a landing, their attempts would have been unsuccessful; but before this happened ministers had nothing to build upon, and they ought to have prepared every means of defence in their power. This point, however, did not affect the conduct of the Admiralty. If the best means of securing Ireland were not taken, it was the fault of administration in general. He should vote for the inquiry, in the hope that the House would proceed farther, and show to whom the disasters of the war were to be attributed, and why ministers did not improve the opportunities which presented themselves.

The Earl of *Liverpool* maintained, that a channel fleet, equal to that of the enemy, had been always deemed sufficient for our defence. Such was the understanding in the last and in all our former wars: when we had such a fleet, we had always felt ourselves secure, and no blame was ever imputed to ministers for not providing a greater force. Whether that was the case in the present instance, was a point that did not seem to be much disputed. Admiral Colpoys had 15 ships to face the enemy, and three of them were three-deckers; and as to the place to which he was to direct his force, it was not for the defence of Ireland exclusively; it was for the defence of every part of his majesty's European dominions. It was a question where the fleet could be best stationed for general defence; and he maintained, it actually had been stationed in a place and situation, where it could operate to the best advantage for the defence of this nation, and was in readiness to go to the defence of Ireland, as soon as to any other part. Admiral Colpoys had orders to intercept the enemy's fleet going to any part of the world; and although at this time it appeared doubtful whether they were intended for Portugal or for Ireland, was it possible to imagine, that if admiral Colpoys thought they were going to Ireland, he had such orders as did not leave him at liberty to follow them to Ireland? The admiral, viewing all the circumstances, took the resolution to remain on his station. From all the information he had, he was right in doing so; and all that happened to disappoint his hopes and expectations, was owing to the wind. Every thing had been done that human prudence was capable of under all the circumstances, and therefore he could not agree to throw the smallest censure upon administration by assenting to the inquiry.

The Duke of *Bedford* confessed, that he was but little satisfied with the consolation held out by the noble earl who spoke last, that it was always deemed sufficient, in former wars, for us to equal the enemy with a channel fleet; thereby insinuating, that it would be sufficient for us to do so in this. Such doctrine appeared to him to be but frigid consolation, after the repeated assertions, that we had almost annihilated the maritime power of France. As little satisfaction did he receive from the general assertions of the noble earl upon the wind and weather. None of those assertions appeared to him to answer the

statements and the arguments of his noble relation, who had so ably opened the subject to their lordships. The noble earl at the head of the admiralty had avoided all the prominent points that bore upon the conduct of ministers, and had dwelt elaborately on those minute points that had little or no bearing upon the main question; and this was what ministers called exculpating themselves. It appeared to him unaccountable, that the Irish expedition should have taken place, when it was known that we had above a hundred ships of war in the European seas. It had been said, that at the time the armament was preparing at Brest, it was uncertain whether it was intended for Ireland or for Portugal, and that the chance was equal. Now he would ask, whether, supposing the chance to be equal, there was a man in the world who thought it would be wise in us to put Portugal in the scale against Ireland? Whether there was an Englishman rash enough to put these two chances upon an equality? Admiral Colpoys, he had no doubt, acted well, according to the information and instructions he received; but he must contend, that from the information which ministers received, he ought to have had positive orders to sail to Ireland. It was notorious, from the documents upon the table, that this fleet ought to have been in Ireland when the French were there; for ministers had early information of the Brest fleet being to sail, and probably that they were destined for Ireland. Indeed, they could not deny that they had information, or that they ought to have had it, considering the sums of money they were allowed for obtaining intelligence. They might have judged, they ought indeed to have known, from the arms that were on board, and from the nature of the equipment, that it was destined for Ireland. It was evident, from the nature of that equipment, that the French were going to a place where they thought they should meet with a number of men to join them, and therefore they carried arms with them to put into the hands of such men. They were deceived in that expectation; but that was a circumstance for which we were not indebted to ministers. He thought the House had only to read the papers on their table, and to attend to the speech of the first lord of the admiralty, to be satisfied of the necessity of inquiry.

Lord *Hood* said:—Giving, my lords, the noble mover full credit for thinking

himself well founded in all he has said, and even admitting that appearances may have very forcibly struck his mind, of errors in the management and disposition of his majesty's fleet, yet I must totally dissent from the noble earl, from a conviction that no good can, and that much mischief must, unavoidably arise from the proposed inquiry at this time, when every heart and hand ought most cordially to be united, not only for the preservation of all we hold dear and valuable, but even for the very salvation of the kingdom; and whatever difference of opinion there may be upon the present question, I think there can be but one, that, previous to the end of last summer, the misfortunes and disappointments we have unhappily experienced in the course of the very just and necessary war into which we have been forced, can be attributed only to the elements, and to the very strange, unaccountable, and perfidious conduct of the court of Spain. I therefore hope I shall not witness the shadow of despondency in any of your lordships; and confidently trust, that by vigorous exertions in the several departments of the state, the nation's wishes (by the blessings of Divine Providence) will soon be completely gratified by a successful and honourable termination of the war. With respect to the whispers that have been sent abroad, and secretly encouraged, against a noble lord whom I am proud to stand in near connexion to, and also against those gallant officers, admiral Colpoys and lord Keith, they are undeserving any notice, because I know they dare not openly be avowed. Yet this I cannot refrain from saying, that, from the strictest inquiry into the conduct of each, it will be found, I am very confident, in every part perfectly correct, full of zeal for the public service, and highly creditable to them.—But one principle, either in parliament, or in the line of my profession, has guided my conduct, that of strict duty to my king and country, and a very sincere attachment to his majesty's government, and our glorious constitution; nothing that can happen to me, however much and painful I may feel it, will ever make me depart from that principle; and a consciousness of having discharged my duty with zeal and industry, as a faithful servant of the public, in the several situations in which I have had the honour to be placed, will bear me up against every misfortune, and afford much

consolation in my decline of life. I avail myself, and am happy in this opportunity, of impressing upon your lordships, that I have not been indifferent to being thrown upon the shelf in the present state of the country, for whilst I had a foot to stand upon, and my mental faculties (such as they are) were unimpaired, it would have been my pride to have gone on doing my best to the end of the war, had I been so permitted. It has, however, been otherwise decreed, and as I was inclined to conclude it was, for wise and beneficial purposes to the state, it became me, consistent with my feelings of duty to it, silently to submit, irksome as it was, without complaining.

Lord *Auckland* said, he would readily acknowledge the magnitude of the national disappointment. The most ardent imagination could not go beyond his ideas of the advantages which would have been obtained, if either of our squadrons had fortunately met with the French fleet. He would farther admit, that the sense of our disappointment had occasioned a grievous depression in the mind of the people both in Great Britain and in Ireland. Perhaps he might add, that it had been the great operative cause of the convulsion in the public credit. And here he must be permitted to call their lordships attention to the strange paradox exhibited to the present age, and to history. This kingdom, armed beyond all example with a fleet of 120 ships of the line, with more than 300 frigates and other vessels of force, and with two or three hundred thousand men in arms within the country, was drooping under an alarm of a French invasion! This same kingdom, holding a more extensive dominion than any nation ever before possessed, and enjoying an unparalleled extent of commerce, prosperity, and opulence, was for the moment in a position approaching to public bankruptcy; uniting the extremes of power and of wealth with the opposite extremes of helplessness and poverty! Such had been the effects of an exaggerated impression upon an enlightened and informed people, remarkable in other respects for their characteristic bravery, energy, firmness, and consistency. Their lordships, however, would not give way to this infirmity of the human mind; they would not suffer their judgment to be warped by the frowardness of fortune, by a change of war, by a change of wind, or of weather. It was an

uncontested truth, that, at the time when the French armament sailed from Brest, we had a fleet of superior force cruizing off that place, and another fleet of superior force at Spithead nearly ready to sail. Those fleets were under the command of admirals of experienced ability. They were manned and officered as all the British ships of war were now manned and officered. Every intelligence had been forwarded to the commanders without the delay of a moment; every discretionary instruction and power had been given to them; every exertion had been used by them. The result certainly had not been successful. He would not, however, quarrel with the elements, to which alone the disappointment was attributed; but would rather look to the fair and obvious topics of consolation. Our fleets, at least, had sustained neither loss nor damage. The enemy had lost two ships of the line, several frigates, a fourth part in the number of vessels of the whole expedition with the farther loss of 4 or 5,000 men. They had greatly damaged the remaining part of their force, and had incurred an enormous expense to no purpose. It was another just ground of consolation, that the people of the south of Ireland had, on this occasion, shown a loyalty, a zeal, and a courage above all praise. Through the whole course of the war, our navy had exhibited an uninterrupted series of the most brilliant successes. The commerce of the enemy had been annihilated; its naval force had been utterly broken and reduced; 35 ships of the line and 75 frigates had been taken; our parliamentary journals had been crowded every session with thanks to the admirals, officers, and seamen, and the naval character of the country raised to an elevation far beyond example in any history of any nation.

The Earl of *Guilford* said, that some sort of inquiry was felt to be necessary even by administration; for no sooner had the subject been mentioned in the House, than the noble earl at the head of the admiralty was ready to produce the papers that had been laid upon the table. That they had been garbled, he would not say; but he would contend, that for the purpose of conveying any information, they had been very badly selected. He could find in those papers no good reason for admiral Colpoys being kept so long at sea. It was the belief of all, that the preparations at Brest were destined

against Ireland; yet, until December, no measures had been taken, except the sending out admiral Colpoys. With respect to the real destination of the Brest fleet, the ministers were, he believed, the only persons who entertained any doubts. Ireland, obviously ought to have been the first point of defence. Ireland, however, had not been protected. Unless their lordships felt the propriety of this inquiry from the papers on the table, and the speech of the noble earl at the head of the admiralty, nothing that could be said upon the subject could have any effect upon their lordships minds.

The Earl of *Scarborough* quoted an expression of sir George Savile, that "to vote for an inquiry into the causes of disaster, was not to vote censure." The present occasion demanded inquiry: every thing had been sacrificed to confidence. He took shame to himself for having gone on so long, and should certainly vote for inquiry.

Lord *Grenville* said, he had listened with astonishment to the mode in which noble lords had supported this motion, and more than once he was really in doubt whether they were not wholly mistaken in the facts upon which they were to decide. An attempt had been made to separate the feelings of ministers, as if they had not all an equal share in this transaction. For his own part, he was ready to acknowledge his share in the transaction, and in the responsibility attached to it; but ministers could not be answerable for things which were not in their power. Whenever any expedition failed, the whole blame was thrown upon ministers, without stopping to ascertain whether they were in fact guilty. It was supposed that they could at pleasure command the winds and waves, and send a fleet up or down the channel at a moment's warning. This had been represented as a national disgrace, though whatever failure there was, was on the side of the enemy, who had lost near 5,000 men in this wild attempt. It might have been supposed, from the manner in which some noble lords had spoken, that this was a complete triumph of the French fleet over ours; whereas their only boast was, that they had succeeded in escaping from our fleet. They had undoubtedly succeeded in escaping from our fleet, but it was in consequence of events which it was impossible to foresee or prevent. Movements at sea could not be made

with the exactness they were on land. Noble lords had unintentionally complimented ministers; "You have not," said they, "been able to catch this miserable wreck of the French fleet." Who made that wreck? The present administration. In no former war had this country been able to keep two fleets in the channel equal to that of the French; and yet in this war, two had constantly been maintained, one ready for sailing, the other occupied in blocking up Brest. Insinuations had been thrown out, as if ministers had considered the safety of Portugal equal in importance to that of Ireland. But if noble lords supposed, that because our fleet was superior, the enemy could not get to the coast of Ireland, he would refer them to two instances, one in 1689, in which year the French landed in Ireland, notwithstanding lord Torrington was at sea with a formidable fleet; and one in the succeeding year, when the same attempt was successfully made, though admiral Russell did every thing in his power to prevent it.—As to Ireland, he was ready to allow, that its defence, as well as that of England, rested upon the fleet; but the state of internal defence, in Ireland, was not such as to render an invasion alarming. The French affected to have hopes of being joined in Ireland; but the event showed how much they were mistaken. This was a convincing argument in answer to those who declaimed upon the discontents in Ireland. Whatever we might feel for the miscarriages of our allies on the continent, in our naval attempts there was nothing but triumph. That in these miscarriages we had suffered some pecuniary loss, he was ready to admit; yet he was so far from regretting what had been thus expended, that were it possible to recall what was passed, he would again vote for the assistance which had actually been given.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* said, that every noble lord must feel a conviction, that had the fleet sent against Ireland been captured, the whole country would have been in perfect security against an invasion. That being the case, was there a man who would say, that it was not proper to know whether, and where blame was imputable? In Ireland it had been a prejudice to represent the government of this country as careless of the sister kingdom. At present a new discontent had arisen; and they who had formerly taken the part of the government, were now

forced to acknowledge, that Ireland had been neglected. Applications had been made from thence for protection; and it must be confessed that that country had been abandoned by England. Ministers had pledged themselves to keep up a great land force in Ireland, which they had withdrawn. In the last war, a pledge had been made, that a naval force should, in all future wars, be kept off the Irish coast; and were he minister now, he should think it necessary to station a fleet in the cove of Cork, and another off Milford-Haven immediately. An inquiry could not but be satisfactory in every point of view; satisfactory to admiral Colpoys, to lord Bridport, and also to the profession. There were, besides, other persons concerned in the inquiry—the admiralty, the navy, the victualling, and other inferior boards. It would not impede, but accelerate operations. Ministers, indeed, had shown some consciousness of the necessity of a mock inquiry at least, by their producing papers; and the first thing to be remarked on these papers, was the notorious want of intelligence. The noble earl had said, that there was such a mass of intelligence before the admiralty, that they knew not which to credit, and which not. That too much was as bad as too little. But did the noble earl never hear of political sagacity, which enabled ministers to discern what they ought to trust to, and what not? Sagacity was the thing lamentably wanted at present. The noble earl had said, that he would resign when he could find a person daring enough to contend against the winds. What the public wanted was, not a man who could govern against the winds and waves, but one who could govern with them. The wind had been favourable; and all that had been wanting was an admiralty capable of making use of it. On the 16th of December, admiral Colpoys received intelligence of the French having sailed; the wind continued fair, and if he had had proper orders, he would have been off the Irish coast. Had the ships under lord Bridport been ready, the wind would still have been fair. The noble earl had talked of long nights. Was it a great stretch of foresight, to know that there were long nights in December? But the French fleet, it seemed, might have gone up the channel. In the first place, the wind was against them: but if they had, what would have been the case? They would have

been under lock and key.—The remainder of the subject turned upon two points. Why were not orders given to admiral Colpoys to go off Cape Clear: and why were not more ships kept ready at Portsmouth? It was impossible for ministers to get over these two points.

The House divided upon lord Albemarle's motion: Contents, 14; Proxy, 1. Not-Contents, 74; Proxies, 20.

Report respecting the Promulgating of the Statutes.] March 20. The House having resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Report of the committee appointed to consider of the best mode of promulgating the Statutes,

Mr. Abbot opened the general nature of the business. He stated, that he did not intend to propose that a copy of every public statute should be sent to every person in the kingdom who held a commission of the peace, but he should propose that a proportional allotment should be sent to the justices who sat at various places where the quarter sessions are held. There was one point which he had submitted to men of much greater experience than himself in parliamentary proceedings, and which, with great reluctance, he had been obliged to give up—he meant an alteration in parliamentary diction; for of all the specimens we had of the English language, parliamentary diction was the most perplexed. The operative sentence, or that for which a clause was introduced into a bill, was often hidden in a wilderness of words, which never added to, but often so confounded the sense as to render the whole clause totally unintelligible, so that the intention of the legislature was thus often entirely lost. Indeed, the legal terms of our jurisprudence were liable to this objection, and it was very grievous, inasmuch as it was often productive of endless confusion. He therefore sincerely wished that at some future period this subject might be taken up. We might derive much advantage in this particular by examining the proceedings of others. The legislative and judicial proceedings of the congress and states of America, although, like all human institutions, they were imperfect, yet certainly came much nearer to the point of perfection, in clearness of language, than our own. If we were to take them for a model, perhaps it might be well. If the executive government, whose duty it was to attend to these

points in the bills which they had occasion to introduce, were to try the effect of some alteration in the language of statutes, he was persuaded it would soon be productive of great national advantage. He looked forward to this as a source of great national improvement. He then moved the following Resolutions:—“1. That it is expedient, for the more general and speedy promulgation of the laws, that his majesty's printer (instead of printing the 1,126 copies of such of the public statutes of the realm as are now printed by him at his majesty's expense) should be authorized and directed to print not less than 3,550 copies of every public general statute, 200 copies of every public local statute (including road acts), and 200 copies of each private statute; which it appears, from the statements contained in the report referred to this committee, may be done without any additional expense to the public. 2. That his majesty's printer should be authorized and directed to print and deliver (or transmit by post) as soon as possible, after each bill has received the royal assent, the aforesaid number of 3,550 copies of each public general statute, according to a certain mode of distribution. 3. That his majesty's printer should be authorized and directed to print and deliver, or transmit in like manner, the aforesaid 200 copies of each public, local, and private statute, according to a certain mode of distribution. 4. That every chief magistrate, and head officer, of any city, borough, or town corporate, in England and Wales, and of every royal burgh in Scotland, and every sheriff, clerk of the peace, and town clerk, receiving any such copies, should preserve them for the public use, and transmit them to his successor in office. 5. That, for the purpose of effectuating the promulgation of private statutes, and also of ensuring an adequate compensation to the clerk of the parliament, and officers of the House of Lords (in lieu of their annual average emoluments arising from the office copies of such statutes) without bringing any new charge upon the public, the parties interested in every such statute should make good such expense and compensation; and that thereupon such printed copies of every such statute should be made judicially admissible in evidence. 6. That his majesty's printer should also be authorized and directed, to class the general statutes and the special statutes (viz. the public, local, and private acts)

of each session in separate volumes, and to number the chapters of each class separately, and also to print one general title to each volume, together with a general table of all the acts passed in that session. 7. That the precise duration of every new temporary law should be expressed in the title of the bill, and also in a distinct clause at the end of the bill, and no where else. 8. That, where the revival of several expired statutes, or the continuance of several expiring statutes, is proposed, all such as are to be revived should be included in one bill; and such as are to be continued in another: and that every bill, presented for the revival of several statutes, or for the continuance of several statutes, should express in its title, that the same is for reviving, or for continuing, the several statutes therein mentioned; and should describe in its title every such statute by its year, chapter, and day of passing; together with the precise duration proposed to be given thereto."

The Resolutions were agreed to.

Debate on the Earl of Moira's Motion respecting the State of Ireland.] March 21. The Earl of Moira rose to make his promised motion on the state of Ireland. He said that where two separate and independent legislatures existed, acting each within its own sphere for the happiness of two countries united under a common head, and identified by a common interest, it certainly was of the utmost importance for them mutually to respect the line by which their authority was bounded. They ought to be careful not to exceed the line of demarcation, and to employ the utmost delicacy in agitating questions in which the privileges and the independence of each other were involved. Although this general truth could not be disputed, circumstances, however, might occur in which, consistently with the most perfect regard to independent rights and separate authorities, it might be meritorious for them mutually to manifest their attention and their anxiety for objects in which their common interests were concerned. The delicacy with which this species of interference was conducted, would afford an assurance of the purity of the motive. It would effectually guard against the irritating suspicion of usurpations which awaken jealousies and kindle resentments. Free from every appearance of an affected superiority

and overbearing dominion, such an interference for common interest would be received with kindness and attended with advantage. When urgent cases rendered interference necessary, the delicacy that had been observed, removed every jealousy which might otherwise be excited: and when the measure is embraced, it is with the sense that those whom it regards will consider it in the same spirit by which it was dictated, and view it with the same interest from which it flowed. Upon these grounds, he now rose to move an address to his majesty, that he would be graciously pleased to interpose his paternal and beneficent interference, to remedy the discontents which prevailed in Ireland, and which created the most serious alarm for that country, and of the British empire. It might, perhaps, be objected, that this was an interference with the independent authority of the Irish legislature. But would such an intention be imputed to him, who had repeatedly opposed every pretension that could bring that independence into doubt; to him, who had reprobated so strongly those measures which interfered with that legislature when they were about to complete their own work, and when they would have carried it to that perfection which would have removed the causes which produced those discontents that rendered the present interference necessary? This was no question of internal regulation. It was a point of common concern, and of mutual interest, upon which both countries had an equal right to stand forward. That cases, demanding the exercise of this common right, might occur, could scarcely be disputed. He did not wish to make any odious allusion to any former discussion; but suppose, as a possible case, such a disposition of the British fleet was intended as would leave Ireland defenceless—might not the Irish House of Lords interfere by an address to his majesty, praying that such a measure might not be adopted? If, in the course of a negotiation with France, any conditions were to be stipulated which would prove particularly prejudicial to Ireland, would it be incompetent for the Irish House of Lords to address his majesty, that he would be graciously pleased to interpose to prevent its taking effect? Such objections as these could not be urged with any propriety, or maintained with any success. In speaking of the necessity of the measure he proposed, he hoped he

should be excused from going into any detail. The extent and rapid increase of the discontents which prevailed in Ireland, were subjects of sufficient notoriety to form the ground of this proceeding. He should abstain, therefore, from enumerating the particulars which had come to his knowledge, and of which, indeed, he had recently been witness. They appeared unnecessary to the resolution which the House was now called upon to sanction. In addressing his majesty to the effect proposed, the House would not only exercise one of its most important privileges, but fulfil one of its most important duties. If it appeared that his majesty's ministers, had not given that advice which was calculated to ensure the happiness and prosperity of Ireland, it was the duty of their lordships to approach the throne with advice more wise and salutary. But it might be said, what influence could such an address carry with it, to change the councils by which Ireland was governed? To prove the influence of the British cabinet, he appealed to a recent fact, he meant the recall of earl Fitzwilliam, at a time when all Ireland concurred in the measures which he pursued, when that country gave the fairest prospect of tranquillity, and the surest pledge of assistance and support to Britain in the arduous circumstances in which she was placed. To the impolicy of this measure the distracted state of Ireland was now to be imputed. If the British cabinet could interfere so successfully for what he deemed an impolitic and mischievous purpose, could they not interfere for the salutary end of recommending wisdom and producing good? He was convinced that the general sentiment of Ireland was that of cordial attachment to this country, and that it was the determination of the majority to stand or fall with this country. But, amid the distractions with which Ireland was agitated, the jealousies which now prevailed, and under the system which now subsisted, their lordships should recollect what incalculable advantage was given to disaffected spirits to represent the bad effects which resulted from their connection with this country. He could conceive no state of things more fatal than that Ireland should be the subject of continual jealousy and distrust to this country. Unless wise measures were taken to prevent it, such, however, would be the state to which we should be reduced. He trusted that the army upon

which we relied for the defence of Ireland would ever remain faithful to their king and to the British empire. But would it not be unwise to trust entirely to this resource? Would it not be impolitic to rely upon this last resort before they had done every thing to obtain a better security? It might be asked what was the plan which he wished to pursue? This, however, was indicated in the motion itself. It was by temper, equity, and good faith, that the distractions of Ireland were to be appeased, and their affections conciliated. No good could be expected from a prosecution of the present system. He was confident, however, that the adoption of measures calculated to impress the people with confidence in the government, would quickly call forth that fond affection of the inhabitants of Ireland to this country, which circumstances might cloud, but could not extinguish: inspire that zeal so necessary in the present moment; and furnish those resources which were requisite for the critical situation in which we were placed, and the arduous contest in which we were engaged. On these grounds, therefore, he now moved, "That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, imploring his majesty's paternal and beneficent intervention to remedy the discontents which unhappily prevailed in his majesty's kingdom of Ireland, and which seriously threaten the dearest interests of the British empire."

Lord Grenville said, that the present motion could not be adopted without breaking the solemn compact which had been entered into between the two countries, without tearing asunder every bond of union and connexion, and spreading distraction and division between the members of the British empire. The noble Lord had attempted to remove the objection, that the motion was an interference with the independent legislature of Ireland, but without success. It was stated that dissensions, distractions, and discontents, prevailed in Ireland. In the address, however, the noble lord did not state the cause of those dissensions and distractions. Such an address he conceived to be wholly unnecessary. In the course of a reign of 36 years, his majesty had applied himself to remove every ground of uneasiness or discontent which the situation of that country presented. In the beginning of the present reign, the people of Ireland had been disunited, but

to a much greater degree than at present. He would desire any one to compare the state of Ireland, as it was left by his majesty's ancestors, with its present situation. He would ask them to look at the Catholics, admitted to the exercise of their political rights, and to the enjoyment of their property; to the participation of every civil and social blessing, restored to that confidence in themselves which the laws had formerly destroyed; freely permitted to engage in every species of commerce, and to apply themselves to every profession of honour and reputation; sharing the right of voting for members of parliament; and in their whole conduct manifesting the effects of the benefits they had received in the best manner in which benefits could operate on the human mind. He would desire their lordships to consider their conduct upon the late occasion, when the enemy, deluded by false representations of the state of Ireland, risked the last remnant of their fleet, and embarked an inferior army, in the rash hope of being able to succeed in their designs by the disunion and disaffection of the inhabitants of Ireland. For a proof of the good disposition of the Catholics upon that occasion, he could refer to the unexceptionable testimony of the reverend prelates, who worthily show themselves their guides in religious matters.—[Here his lordship read some passages of the circular letter from the Catholic bishop of Cork.]—Thus it appeared, that his majesty's exertions had already been crowned with success. That this success was not complete, was subject of regret: jealousies had appeared, but they had been conciliated by the paternal care of his majesty. What stronger pledge could be given of his majesty's intention to persevere in the same course, than what he had already done? The Irish had created a commerce with which they were before unacquainted, extended their manufactures, and what they deemed still more valuable, had obtained a free constitution. If the motion was intended to implore his majesty to employ his paternal care in remedying the discontents which prevail, it was unnecessary; and not only unnecessary, it was highly mischievous. This was a different case from those which the noble lord had stated. A negotiation was clearly a case of common interest, in which both parties would be entitled to interfere. But if there was any point which could be considered exclu-

sively of internal regulation more than another, it was the present. The motion was intended to apply to the internal state of Ireland, and to the frame of its independent legislature. About 14 years ago, when discontents and heartburnings were represented to exist, on account of the right not much exercised, but broadly asserted, to exist in the statute book of this country, to make laws to bind Ireland, his majesty had advised parliament to disclaim that right, and to repeal the obnoxious statute. This accordingly was done, and the 6th of Geo. 1st was repealed. Some difficulties that had not been foreseen occurred. A paramount jurisdiction had existed in their lordships, and appeals were brought before them in the last resort. An appeal having been brought upon this ground, their lordships very properly passed an act, renouncing all such right, and enacting, that parliament should be restrained from entertaining any bill which pretended, in any degree, to bind the inhabitants of Ireland. Their lordships were now called upon to interfere in a point most exclusively relating to the internal state of that country. Such an interference was obviously improper; it was, besides, impossible for them to proceed with sufficient information, which lay much more within the reach of their own legislature. The interference of the British legislature, instead of remedying the discontents which prevailed, would tend to inflame them. It would induce the people of Ireland to imagine, that their own legislature was indifferent to their welfare, and thus stir up the divisions which it was the object to appease. As the British legislature had given to Ireland the blessings of a free constitution, the best way to fix their attachment to it was, to engage their confidence in its favour.

Earl Fitzwilliam could not agree, that this country ought never to give any opinion upon the state of Ireland. That such interference, for the purpose of averting evils which threatened the two countries, was proper and fitting, he thought extremely clear. What the noble secretary had said, as to the improved state of Ireland, was certainly true; but whatever circumstances might have contributed to that prosperity, still there might remain room for something farther to be done. If this was the case, were we to go no farther because we had already made considerable progress? A certain

class of the people of Ireland had long been held in a state of degradation; and if the circumstances on which this was thought necessary no longer existed, was it not the duty of the House to call upon those who had the authority, to remove the grievances which yet remained? The noble secretary had said, that the people of Ireland were tranquil and happy; but was it a proof of this, that acts of indemnity had been passed, in the Irish parliament, for proceedings beyond the law, which must have been called for by a conduct not very consistent with tranquillity? If no circumstances of disorder appeared, why were whole parishes, baronies, and even counties, declared to be out of the king's peace? It was likewise stated, in the proceedings of the government in Ireland, that they were disarming the people in certain districts, from which it was evident that they had been in arms. Was this a state of things by which this country was in no danger of being affected? Connected with each other by ties of individual friendship, and by a general common public interest, was it beyond the proper sphere of consideration in that House to address his majesty to employ his paternal care in quieting the minds of the people, and restoring the inhabitants of Ireland to tranquillity and happiness. It was the duty of the House to allay every discontent to which wisdom could extend, and to fortify the country by every resource which policy could secure.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, that the motion appeared to him to be improper, whether it was intended to induce them, in their legislative capacity, to interfere in the affairs of Ireland, or to advise his majesty to exercise his authority in a particular way over that branch of the empire. On the latter supposition it was unnecessary, since his majesty had been uniformly employed in extending his royal beneficence to that people; and on the former, it would be highly unbecoming in that House to interfere with the Irish parliament, to which alone belonged the regulation of the internal affairs of that country. Suppose a motion was made in the Irish parliament for the purpose of inducing it to interfere in the discussion of the great question of parliamentary reform, or Catholic toleration in this country, how would it be received by the British parliament? And was it less improper for the House of Lords in this

country to interfere in the discussion of questions, the decision of which belonged only to the Irish parliament, and to which its jurisdiction was alone competent? Such discussions, instead of conciliating the affections of Ireland, would awaken jealousies between the countries which would not be easily removed. The motion seemed to him to be as mischievous in its tendency, as it was unconstitutional in its principle.

The Earl of *Moir* granted that the legislature of Ireland was independent, but still maintained that in every matter where the common interest of both countries was concerned, the British legislature had a right to interfere. The noble secretary had entered into a detail of the advantages which Ireland had enjoyed, under the auspicious reign of his present majesty, which he justly stated to be numerous and great, and from this detail he inferred, that discontent ought not to exist. But why did he forget, that notwithstanding all the generous liberality which they had experienced from their sovereign, there was still a part of the boon unbestowed? Did he not know that they had still a plea of the strongest kind unanswered? Was he not informed that the Catholics of Ireland insisted upon their right of being elected members of the legislature, upon the ground, that if they had some of their body in parliament, the persecutions which had existed would not have taken place? But here, perhaps, it would be said, that he was speaking of persecutions as vaguely as he had done of discontents, and that the one had as little foundation as the other. He knew, however, no fewer than ninety-one householders who had been banished from one of his own estates, after being plundered of their property, and many of them wounded in their persons. The discontents were not confined to one sect; they were common to the Protestants as well as the Catholics. Did noble lords recollect, that district after district, parish after parish, and at last, whole counties in one dash had been put out of the king's peace. Did they recollect, that in the county of Down, which was one of the largest, the richest, and the most industrious in Ireland, the whole of the inhabitants had been declared out of the peace of the king; that a general disarming, even of the Protestant subjects in that country, had taken place; that military parties had been sent in the night to various parts of that county, in order to effect

these purposes? Did they recollect, that these military men were empowered to act with a "vigour beyond the law,"—were told, that they were not to wait for the aid of magistrates, but were to effect their purpose by using force, if force should be found necessary? Were these things true, and would it be contended that this country was not implicated in the result, or that it was foreign to its duty to interfere?

The Earl of *Gulford* could not give a silent vote, after what he had heard from the noble secretary upon the danger of discussing the present question, which was no less than tearing asunder the two countries, and destroying the bond of union which now subsisted between them. The argument of the noble secretary went not so much to protect the independence of the Irish parliament, as to secure ministers against responsibility. He could not admit that ministers had shown any attention to the interests of Ireland since earl Fitzwilliam was recalled, the measures of whose administration gave such universal satisfaction. If the advice, therefore, was not necessary to the king, of whose paternal concern for his people he entertained no doubt, it was highly requisite to his ministers.

Earl *Spencer* said, that if the noble earl meant to do any good by his motion, he ought to have gone much farther, and pointed out not only the nature of the discontents, but the kind of measures which ought to be resorted to in order to remove them. Supposing the evil to require a remedy, that remedy ought to be applied by the Irish legislature. The subject was one of great moment, but he was afraid that discussions of this sort were calculated rather to create new jealousies than to heal past dissensions.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* said, that if the present was a subject of delicacy, ministers were the cause of it. There was nobody less inclined to question, or to infringe upon, the independence of the Irish legislature than he was; but there was a great difference between infringing upon that independence, and acting in their capacity as the great hereditary council of the king. The doctrine which ministers had held forth, he was inclined to think, was much more calculated to foment jealousies between the two legislatures than the motion of the noble lord, were it carried into effect. The lord lieutenant of Ireland, as a minister, was ac-

countable to the British, as well as to the Irish parliament; and therefore they had a right to watch over the measures of his administration, and to censure or advise him as they might deem proper. The noble secretary had entered into a pompous and elaborate display of the advantages which Ireland had enjoyed under the reign of the present king. But he would ask him, whether the immunities which had been granted to Ireland had not been fully justified by the consequences; and that, too, after they had been refused by their own legislature? It was in the recollection of almost every noble lord, that, when a petition was presented to the Irish parliament by a numerous and respectable body of that kingdom, the prayer of it was rejected with something little short of indignation; but when deputies were sent over to this country, they were graciously received, and their mission was attended with its desired effect. He confessed, that upon the state of Ireland, he did not possess such accurate information as some of their lordships, but he had heard that the Catholics had formerly been persecuted by the Protestants in a horrid manner; that the former had been driven by a small number of the latter from their habitations in the north, but were now returning; that the Protestants were rebuilding those houses that had been destroyed, and that a union was now forming between them, which, if not attended to in time, might be productive of the most alarming effects. There were two descriptions of men in Ireland: the first description were well known for their daring spirit; there were not wanting persons among them celebrated in arms, in arts, and even in literature; they were men over whom courts could never have any influence, and who were to be led, not driven—such were the men in the north of Ireland. The whole south was characterised by unruly passions, which were always the prominent features of men unemployed. What the event might be it was impossible to say. He warned them, however, that it might be such as to shake the empire to its centre. And it was a subject which involved such consequences to be set aside by a few words about the independence of the Irish parliament—an expression which, till of late years, used never to be heard of from ministers? The motion was couched in terms so wise, so prudent, and so moderate, that he could

scarcely have supposed that it could have been objected to. What was its purport? It said to his majesty, "Sire, you have attached the people of Ireland to your family and government, by the same liberal and generous conduct by which your grandfather gained the affections of the Highlanders of Scotland. There is but one small cause of discontent still remaining, and it is only necessary that you follow up those wise and salutary measures which you have hitherto acted upon to remove it." This was all that the motion proposed. If it was done in time, the measure might be successful; but, the longer the delay, the greater the danger. When he considered the nature of the meeting at Dublin, within a few yards of the Castle, and that a man of high consequence was at the head of it, it was impossible not to look upon the matter as serious. How far force might be sufficient, it was not easy to say. What had been the effect of it in the last war, was in the recollection of every one; but the fact was, that procrastination only tended to increase, not diminish the difficulty. If the grievances of the Catholics had been redressed last year, the House would not have heard of reform. Next year, perhaps, other points may be urged, and the breach would grow wider and wider, till at length it would be found impossible to heal it. Mr. Erskine, in his admirable pamphlet, had wisely said, "Give the people of Ireland their rights, and you will neither require fleets nor armies to protect them." Three millions of loyal people would defy the power of France; and he begged that it should be recollected, that if they were united, they might, perhaps, defy the strength of other countries too! The example of Genoa was before them. He would conclude with quoting the authority of sir Robert Walpole, who considered it as much better policy to comply with the wishes of a nation when they were strongly expressed, even though they might be founded in delusion, than to resist the general will, when, as in the case of Ireland at present, it was distinctly manifested.

Marquis *Townshend* wished every thing that tended to ameliorate the condition of the people of Ireland should be done. He could enumerate many things of a beneficial nature that had been done, and wished them to be followed up by others. He stated some of the subjects of complaint that appeared to him to be well

founded, such as the number of men of large fortune wholly absenting themselves from the kingdom. For these and the like complaints he wished there was a remedy, but he could not approve of this mode of interfering in the internal regulations of Ireland.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* admitted there had been considerable improvements in the regulation of the internal affairs of Ireland. He saw the necessity of doing much for the poor of this country, but more particularly of Ireland; and if any thing could be done by individual example, he was ready to join in it. There was a great quantity of land in Ireland which now produced nothing, but which might be made to produce a great deal, and a great number of people who at present had nothing to do, might be well employed in the cultivation of that land. He should be glad to join in any plan to remedy the defect he had hinted at. Perhaps by dividing a large estate into small and separate properties, the country might be benefited. But whatever was done ought to be purely voluntary, for he had no idea of force in the distribution or management of any man's property.

The Earl of *Darnley* said, that the motion, though couched in general terms, evidently pointed to the emancipation of the Catholics, as the supposed ground of the present discontents in Ireland, and of the necessity of the interference of the House in offering their advice to his majesty on that subject. If he thought there existed such a necessity, he should assent to the motion: he could not agree, that the House should never interfere in the affairs of Ireland. He opposed the motion, upon the ground that the situation of Ireland did not call for it. He never remembered a time when all descriptions of men in Ireland were so satisfied with the administration as they were at present. He was well persuaded from what he had recently seen, that the executive government was never so popular in Ireland as at present. As a proof of this, he would mention the loyalty which the people of that country had manifested at the approach of the enemy who attempted to invade them. Discontents there were in that country among a certain description of persons, but by no means among the general mass of the people, on whose behalf the popular cry of Catholic emancipation was supposed to have been raised; though, in fact, it

was made use of for a very different purpose, by persons who had no interest in the cause of the Catholics, but as it might serve to cover their designs of subverting the government. The discontented were not the poor Catholics of the South, who had shown such enthusiastic attachment to their country, when the enemy was on their coast, but the rich Protestants of the North, who had manifested a very different spirit. Besides, the great body of the Irish Catholics, the lower orders of the community, never could be interested in the question, having already received every indulgence; what remained to be granted only affected those in the higher situations of life.

The Duke of *Bedford* said, he had understood, that the great mass of the people of Ireland were much discontented with the treatment they had experienced. He thought there had been some evidence of that when there was a necessity for an indemnity bill to the Protestants for what had happened there. It appeared to him extraordinary that men should be satisfied who were proscribed all benefits of the state under which they lived. It seemed, they gave an instance of attachment to government, when an enemy was upon their coast threatening them with invasion. But had government shown any disposition to reward them for this generous attachment? Quite the contrary. Their lordships, he was sorry to say, had too often listened to the trifling shifts of ministers, when any charge was exhibited against them in that House. They must cease to listen to those shifts, if it was their object to save the state from ruin. But it might be asked, what he thought likely to restore happiness to Ireland? Upon this he had no scruple to deliver his opinion. Restore to the people of Ireland the person you have recalled; give back to them the man whom they have tried, and whom they admire; act on the principles on which he acted; and then discontents will cease. If you do not, God only knows into how much more dreadful a state that unhappy country may be reduced.

The House divided: Contents, 20; Proxy, 1—21; Not-Contents, 71; Proxies, 20—91.

Debate on Mr. Fox's Motion respecting the State of Ireland.] March 23. In pursuance of the notice he had given,

Mr. *Fox* rose and said:—The business, Sir, which I am about to bring before the House, is one not only of great importance in its nature, but of great urgency in point of time. It is not my wish to go at length into all the causes that have produced the uneasiness that exists in Ireland, and which has created a similar uneasiness here; but I do think it necessary to recur to a period somewhat distant from the present, in order to enable the House to form an accurate opinion upon the subject, and to induce them to accede to the motion which it is my intention to submit to them. Sir, in the year 1782, very great discontents existed in Ireland, and it appeared to me to be indispensably necessary, that every thing should be done, on the part of the government, to appease and allay them. With this view I proposed the recognition of the complete independence of Ireland.* It is not now of importance to consider whether that recognition was a boon or a right. It is not necessary for me to discuss whether it was a right demanded by justice, or a boon required by policy. But having been the person who proposed that act, I consider myself bound to follow up the principle of it, which was to make Ireland a free and independent country: and, above all, to adopt such measures as are calculated to admit her to the enjoyment of all the advantages of that independence, and to restore that cordial affection between the two countries, so eminently requisite to the preservation and prosperity of both. To those who consider the recognition as a right, and still more to those who view it as a boon, it may seem not a little extraordinary, after a conduct so just and liberal on the part of this country, that, from the period of 1782, there have been growing scenes of dissatisfaction and discontent in that country, and that at this moment Ireland is in a condition at which no man can look without the deepest alarm. In my opinion, therefore, the parliament of Great Britain is naturally called upon to inquire, how it has happened that those concessions have not produced all the salutary consequences that might have been expected from them, and it is on that account that I think it the duty of this House, and my own duty in particular to direct the attention of the British legis-

* See Vol. 22, pp. 1247, 1264; and Vol. 23, p. 20.

lature to the present state of the sister kingdom.

Sir, without entering into particulars, no man will deny, that the situation of Ireland, at the present moment, is one of great peril; it appears by late accounts that we are commencing a system of rigour, occasioned by what some consider as discontents, and others the disaffection that at present subsist among the people—to that situation it becomes us to advert, and by wise counsels to provide such remedies as the circumstances of the case may require. In such an important situation, we ought to approach the throne with that advice which may be calculated to avert the dangers which threaten, and to remedy the distractions which prevail. It is sufficient for this purpose to show that Ireland is in a state of disturbance and discontent, and it is material to inquire how this situation of things has been occasioned. Although a variety of circumstances have combined to produce this state, there are two or three leading points to which I propose chiefly to direct the attention of the House. These are, how far, in consequence of the concessions which have been made to Ireland, she has, in fact and in substance, enjoyed the advantages of an independent legislature; whether, in that form of a free constitution which they obtained, the people possess that political weight to which they are entitled; and whether their just voice and influence have been promoted by the alteration which was effected? Other points there may be, perhaps, nearly as important; but these certainly are objects of most essential consideration. In viewing the inhabitants of Ireland, we find that a very great proportion, about five-sixths, as it has generally been calculated, are Roman Catholics. It is true, that considerable concessions have been made in their favour, and several of the grievances under which they laboured have apparently been removed. The question, however, is, whether in point of fact, these concessions have tended to remove dissatisfaction, and to conciliate attachment? If upon inquiry it shall appear, that the mode in which these concessions were made, and the acts of the executive power with which they were accompanied have produced the severest persecutions of a political nature, those who do not mistake paper regulations and theoretical privileges for practical government, will be convinced that the grounds of discon-

tent of the Roman Catholics have not been redressed, and that they have been kept in a situation worse than that in which they previously stood. These are the principal points which the inquiry must embrace: but there are others unconnected with the state of the Catholics. The inhabitants of the northern part of Ireland are by some considered in a less favourable light, and their grounds of complaint are heard with a less favourable ear. The discontents of no class of men whatever ought to be viewed with that repugnance which precludes an impartial examination; and I cannot much admire the wisdom of those by whom such prejudices are adopted as rules of conduct. The discontents of the inhabitants of the northern parts of Ireland arise from two causes: one of them is the temporary pressure of a war, in which they were involved without interest in the contest, and the distresses which the calamities with which it has been attended, have entailed upon their trade and commerce; the other has been the abuses which they conceived to exist in the constitution by which they are governed. The constitution of Ireland, they complain, does not resemble that of great Britain; they have not a legislature by which the people are even virtually represented; and as to political liberty, they enjoy as small a portion of it, as those who live under monarchies, in which the principles of freedom have never been introduced.

As to the first point, the efficacy of the recognition in 1782, an opinion prevails in Ireland, that whatever may have been the intention with which that measure was adopted, it has not produced a free and independent legislature, but that the advantages which the form of a free constitution seemed to promise, have been counteracted by the influence of the executive government and of the British cabinet. It would be fortunate if this were merely the language of discontent; it would be fortunate if this were an opinion not supported by that unequivocal confirmation it has derived from the measures of government; it would be fortunate if the system which has been uniformly acted upon, did not give to the complaint so much countenance and validity. Without going into particular details, it is impossible not to mention a few of the most striking events which establish its truth. At the time of the unfortunate event of his majesty's indisposition, the

legislature of Ireland took a very decided part; the parliament of Ireland censured the lord lieutenant for the conduct he had pursued, and expressed a decided opinion on the state of public affairs at that period. Immediately after this, however, and during the administration of the same lord lieutenant, a great accession of influence was gained by the crown, and the parliament was prevailed upon to unsay all they had said, and to retract every opinion they had given. It is even matter of notoriety, too, that a regular system was then devised for enslaving Ireland. A person of high consideration was known to say, that half a million of money had been expended to quell an opposition in Ireland, and that as much more must be expended to bring the legislature of that country to a proper temper. This systematic plan of corruption was followed up by a suitable system of measures. It was asserted, and offered to be proved in the Irish parliament, by men of the first character and the highest talents, and when I mention the name of Grattan, I need add nothing more, that it had been the system of government by the sale of peerages to raise a purse to purchase the representation, or rather the misrepresentation of the people of Ireland. The charge was brought by men of as great abilities, of as unimpeached honour, of as high public character and private virtue, as ever appeared either in that country or in this, by men too, who feel a sincere attachment to Great Britain, who cherish the connexion which subsists between the two kingdoms, and who would be as much alarmed as any men, whatever, at any circumstances which might threaten to involve a separation. It was offered to be proved, that one half, or even a majority of the House of Commons, were creatures of the crown. The manner in which these events were considered at that time in Ireland was this: "You have granted us," said the people, "an independent legislature, independent certainly of your parliament, but dependent upon your executive government." The concession, therefore, they viewed not as a blessing, but as a mockery and an insult.

Another proof of this substantial dependence upon the executive government, was evinced in the manner in which the demands of the Catholics had at different times been treated. Their first petition merely prayed for a remedy to some of

the most oppressive grievances under which they laboured, and in the humblest style solicited indulgence and concession. An immense majority of the House of Commons were not content with refusing the desire of the petition, but they resolved to fix upon it a mark of particular insult, by voting its rejection. In this haughty and insulting vote every member under the influence of government concurred. The very next session, however, when the war was begun, and when a more conciliatory conduct was deemed prudent, a petition, comprehending claims much more extensive, obtained a reception very different from their former modest pretensions. The crown recommended the claim, and the same ministers who had caused it to be indignantly rejected, now carried the vote by which pretensions far more important were sanctioned. Of this opposite conduct which the executive government thus displayed, I most certainly approve the latter part; but it is not as deserving approbation that I now insist upon it, but I mention it to show that it is not the representation of a factious declaimer, that it is not mere cant and nonsense, to assert that the independence of the Irish legislature is a delusion, and that their freedom vanishes before the breath of the minister. How, in fact, can the people of Ireland entertain a different opinion, when they see the indecent manner in which government have exhibited the parliament as their creatures? When earl Fitzwilliam went to Ireland in the capacity of lord lieutenant, it was understood that he left London with the approbation of ministers, in favour of the complete emancipation of the Catholics; and though no such vote ever passed the legislature, no doubt was entertained that the measure was to take effect, and that it would have experienced the most complete support from parliament. However I may differ with my noble friend upon his system of politics, it cannot be denied that he was the most popular lord lieutenant with all ranks of men, that had ever been sent to govern Ireland; but after the hopes which had been raised, after the known preparation of parliament to vote complete emancipation to the Catholics, he is suddenly dismissed, the whole system is reversed, and the question which a few weeks before would have been carried with unanimity, is rejected by a vast majority. What was this but the most insulting display of the

dependence of the Irish legislature? Was it not a proof beyond a thousand demonstrations, that the measure of 1782 had been rendered completely inefficacious? that, in fact, Ireland had gained nothing, but was placed in a state of degradation beyond any former period? The effects of this persevering and avowed system of duplicity might, indeed, be different, according to the character and situation of those on whom it operated. The lower classes of the Roman Catholics, unfortunately not more enlightened, nor better informed, nor, perhaps, so well as the peasantry in other countries, though unable to speculate upon political circumstances and to reason upon events, might yet feel its effects. The inhabitants of the northern parts, as well informed, as intelligent, as enlightened as the middling classes in Great Britain, or any other country, would view the system with a more discriminating glance; they would be able to combine the disposition which they saw manifested with the constitutional grievances under which they laboured, and it would at once heighten their sense of abuses, and their desire of reform: but even the concessions which were extended to the Catholics, were conducted upon a plan which seemed studiously intended by government to damp the joy of their success.

Before I proceed, I must here beg leave pointedly to express my abhorrence of the maxim *divide et impera*, and especially that by such a truly diabolical maxim, the government of Ireland should be regulated; on the contrary, I am convinced, that in order to render Ireland happy in herself, and useful in her connexion with this country, every idea of ruling by division ought to be relinquished, and that the object of government should be to effect a complete union of all ranks of men. Disapproving as I do most heartily, the maxim I have mentioned, I cannot help being surprised that a government so little disposed to act upon the principles of justice or of liberty, should have acted as if it had been their aim to undo every part. So little was it the object to inspire the Catholics with gratitude for what had been conceded, that opinions were given without concealment, which left little room for exultation in what had been obtained. It was usual for men of consideration in Ireland, to talk as if what had been done was an act of necessity, which, on a fit occasion, would be recalled: hos-

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tile suspicions were insinuated, not merely against the lower orders of Catholics, whom it seemed to be the policy of government weakly and wickedly to divide from the higher rank, but against men of considerable property, unimpeached character, and undoubted loyalty. Numbers were taken up under charges of high treason; and when acquitted, it appeared that no ground of suspicion could ever have been entertained against them. What could be the object of such proceedings, but to convince the Catholics that the concessions in their favour were extorted, that the hostile mind still existed, and that they were marked out as the victims of the most cruel proscriptions and oppression? Private animosities, too, arose, and produced those different classes of disturbers of the public peace about which so much has been said. The remedies applied tended to foment the evil. The authority of the laws was superseded. Those against whom it was thought convictions could be procured, were taken up; and those whom it would have been impossible to convict, were transported in great numbers, without the ceremony of a trial. To enable the government to pursue these violent measures, the insurrection act was passed. Those who delight in violent measures, rejoiced in the effect of their application. Other laws, nearly as objectionable as the insurrection act, were also adopted; and to one of these I must particularly call the attention of the House, in order to show the inefficacy of violent remedies. It was thought a point of the first necessity to prevent the people, who were the objects of jealousy, from procuring arms. Considering the strength which the government of Ireland possessed, it might have been supposed that none could have obtained arms but those who were armed by the licence of the executive power. Such, however, has been considered the extent of the danger, that a rigour beyond any former measure has been employed in disarming the people. The exercise of one inordinate authority has produced the demand for increased powers, while every remedy that has been applied, has served only to augment the danger.

And now, Sir, a few words upon the grievances of the Catholics and the Dissenters. I know an opinion has gone forth, that the Catholics have now no substantial grievances to complain of, that the presbyterians have still less. It is said

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that the Catholics have had ceded to them all the privileges of the most importance; that they can vote for members of parliament, and that they are not distinguished from the Protestants, but by being excluded from the high offices of state, and from being members of parliament. If this were all, I should still say, that they have a right to all the privileges possessed by the protestants. On what principle ought they to be excluded? On what ground of justice? Sir, upon no ground of justice: the only reason therefore, must be, a reason of policy, which is a sufficient proof of a hostile mind against them.

But let us consider it in another point of view. Is it nothing to have no share in the government, and to be excluded from the higher offices of the state? But it is invidiously objected to the Catholics, that it is not civil liberty which they wish, but power and emolument. To this I would answer for the Catholics, yes; nor is it any discredit that they should be actuated by such desire. I would say, that civil liberty can have no security without political power. To ask for civil liberty without political power, would be to act like weak men, and to ask for the possession of a right for the enjoyment of which they can have no security. I know that distinctions have been made between civil and political liberty, and I admit, that it is possible for whole classes, whole casts and descriptions of men, to enjoy the one without possessing the other. Still, however, I assert, that it can be only by sufferance. I admit, that civil liberty is of a higher kind; but this I contend, that political power is the only security for the enjoyment of the other. The Catholics may justly say, therefore, it is not this or that concession that will satisfy us, but give us that which alone can give us security for its continuance. It is objected also, that the Catholics are not merely ambitious of power, but actuated by views of private emolument. But if this were true, is it improper that the Catholics, contributing so largely to the support of government, should be desirous to share the emoluments which it bestows, as a compensation for what they sacrifice? The compensation, indeed, is trifling; but still, should they, in point of right be excluded from their proportion? Yet, how strongly will their claim be felt, when it is considered who are the disputants? Are the Catholics to be told by a few monopolising politicians, who engross all

places, all reversions, all emoluments, all patronages, "Oh! you base Catholics, you think of nothing but your private emolument! You perverse generation, who have already been permitted to vote for members of parliament, are you so base as to urge the disgraceful demand of a share in personal emoluments?" Sir, the Catholics are men, and are to be governed. The expense of maintaining all governments must be considerable, and that of Ireland is certainly not a model of economy. In the emoluments arising out of the establishments of government, the Catholics have a just right to participate; and for a small and interested minority to imagine that they can monopolize all these advantages to themselves, is a pretension which cannot be admitted. Mankind are not to be treated in this manner. It is not now-a-days that such claims will pass current in the world. The loyalty and activity of the Catholics upon the late attempted invasion, are now the theme of the highest panegyric; but it is empty, unavailing praise: *Laudatur et alget* is the situation of Catholic loyalty. The qualities which are so much extolled, ought to be rewarded by conferring on their possessors those just claims which are yet denied them.

Before I proceed to consider the situation of the Protestants, there is one point relative to the Catholics which I ought to explain. It has been said, that the Catholics are entitled to vote for members of parliament; and the fallacy of this boasted privilege ought to be clearly exposed. Except in the counties, the representation of Ireland remains in what is here known by the name of close corporations. The animosities which formerly subsisted are anxiously kept up by the executive government, who favour the determination to exclude the Catholics from the corporations, so that their privilege is almost entirely evaded. They thus confer in theory a power, which they are careful to defeat in practice. Those who esteem this privilege, then, must be fond of theories upon paper, and unconcerned about their practical effect. Yet the presbyterians consider their grievances to consist in the abuses of the government, which they have not means to remedy. They wish for the substantial blessings of the English constitution. They wish for the political principles on which that constitution is founded. Whoever imagines that a practical resemblance

exists between the government of Ireland and the English constitution, will find that the Irish government is a mirror in which the abuses of this constitution are strongly reflected. I will not speak of the abuses of which we have been used to complain, but if I were desirous to reconcile any one to the abuses of the British constitution, it would be by a comparison with those of Ireland. Whatever may have been thought of the plans of parliamentary reform which have been agitated here, still it was always admitted that the House of Commons should be at least a virtual representation of the people. It certainly was stating the point of virtual representation very high, when it was asserted in this House, that though all the representatives of England were chosen by the county of Middlesex, it would be no reason for reform, so long as such a parliament discharged its duty as a parliament. But, are the people of Ireland unreasonable when they complain that they have not the advantage even of virtual representation? When they complain that the jobbing system of influence and patronage for purposes of personal advantage, is an abuse that totally destroys the spirit of their form of government, and a practical nuisance which cannot be endured? To suppose that a large, industrious, active, and intelligent, body of men can be governed against the principles they have imbibed, and the prejudices by which they are guided, is an idea which history and human nature prove to be absurd. What is the situation of affairs with respect to Ireland? You have raised enormous burdens both in England and in Ireland. You have produced great discontents, and you are reduced to such a point that you must take a decided part. In fact, we now are precisely at the point in which we stood in 1774 with America, and the question is, Whether we are to attempt to retain Ireland by force, instead of endeavouring to gain her by concessions, and to conciliate her by conferring on her the substantial blessings of a free constitution? Whenever I see a government desirous to decide by force against the will of the majority, in these circumstances I behold the danger of civil war. There is this difference now in our situation, that the state of our finances may deter us from encountering such hazardous enterprises. In the other case we were wealthy and prosperous. *Stultitiam patiuntur opes*

might then be said of our situation; but now the critical state of our affairs, and the embarrassed condition of our finances, forbid similar experiments. I hope and trust that the discontents which threaten the separation of Ireland, will be dissipated without the necessity of a war. But now the extremity of rigour has been tried, the severity of despotism has been let loose, and the government is driven to that state when the laws are not to be put in execution, but to be superseded. Ireland is precisely in that state which a person well acquainted with the subject defined to be despotism: "Where the executive power is every thing, and the rights of the people nothing." At the beginning of the American contest, the province of Massachusetts bay was disarmed; but I do not think that if this province had been left armed, the separation of the American colonies would have been accelerated. The people of Ireland are now in that state when, if they should choose to resist, a contest must ensue, the issue of which must be doubtful. In the commencement of the American war I had made such an observation of the disposition of the regular governments of Europe, that I was convinced that France would aid America. In the present there can be no room for doubt that the French would make it a chief point of their policy to give assistance to the insurgents. But suppose you were to succeed in disarming the whole of the north of Ireland, you must keep them in subjection by force. If you do not allay their discontents, there is no way but force to keep them in obedience. Can you convince them by the musket that their principles are false? Can you prove to them by the bayonet that their pretensions are unjust? Can you demonstrate to them by martial law that they enjoy the blessings of a free constitution? No, it is said, but they may be deterred from the prosecution of the objects which you have determined to refuse. But on what is this founded? On the history of Ireland itself? No; for the history of Ireland proves that, though repeatedly subdued, it could not be kept in awe by force; and the late examples will prove the effect which severity may be expected to produce. The character of the people of the north of Ireland has been severely stigmatized. For my own part, it is not my habit to admit a fixed dislike

against any bodies of men, nor do I see any thing in these to justify such dislike. But it is said these men are of the old leaven. They are indeed of the old leaven, that rescued the country from the tyranny of Charles 1st, and James 2nd; they are of that leaven which asserted and defended the principles of liberty; they are of that leaven which fermented, kneaded the British constitution. If these principles have been carried to excess, it is an excess to which I am more partial than to the opposite extreme. The opposition they have suffered is some apology. I am told, that the mode now adopted is this—to declare a country out of the king's peace, it is necessary that there should be a certificate from the magistrates; many of the magistrates are not natives of Ireland, or resident there, but Englishmen and officers of the fencible corps. Are the people to be told that these magistrates are acting only in a civil capacity? But have they not been provoked to violence? Have not several of the principal people of Belfast been taken up? The law is in that state, that men may be kept in prison without trial. Is that an inference of their guilt? I have seen the wanton prosecutions of government in this country which juries happily checked. I have seen too much of these prosecutions to make me draw an inference of guilt from the circumstance of a man's being taken up. I have heard in Ireland of men being ignominiously arrested and carried to Dublin, who on their trials were found to be perfectly innocent, and ought not to have been suspected. The people of the north, attached to these men, were determined that they should not suffer in their property. The people worked for nothing; they reaped their harvests, on purpose to show either their good will to the parties, or their detestation, possibly, of the conduct of government. This, however, was construed to be a heinous offence; the people were dispersed by the military; and when some were killed, the attending their bodies to the grave was deemed criminal, and the persons assisting were dispersed, as if they were doing an act against the state. That these things will goad who can doubt? Is it not possible that they who prefer monarchy may find the exercise of it so bad, as almost to doubt the excellence of a monarchical government? But, should the people even be totally subdued, can you do

otherwise than keep up a large military force? But suppose the people submit—I put the case in that way—can you trust to such a situation? Will their submission to laws which they detest, last longer than your power lasts, and their impotency? Will you continue to keep up your force? During the war, I believe you will. But can Ireland afford to maintain it during peace? Is it the way to persuade the Catholics to assist you, to refuse acceding to their demands? I have heard that a direct application has been made, not from the Catholic peasantry, but from the Catholic nobility; a strong and urgent application to the government to grant the remainder of their demands. I have been told, what certainly it was unnecessary to tell me, that these applications have been unsuccessful. To refuse all these demands, to determine to govern Ireland by military force, to risk a civil war; which of these evils is the worst I know not.

But it may be said, what is to be done? My general principle is to restore peace on principles of peace, and to make concessions on principles of concession. I wish members to read that celebrated speech of Mr. Burke on the subject of such concessions.* Let them read that beautiful display of eloquence, and at the same time sound of reasoning, and they will find in it all those principles which it is my wish to have adopted. There is another expression of that gentleman's, I believe, in his Letter to the people of Bristol. In that letter he says, that "that is a free government which the people who live under it conceive to be so." Apply this to Ireland; make it such a government as the people shall conceive to be a free one. But it is said, it is not possible to satisfy all persons. It may be so. But is there one concession that could be made to the Catholics which the people in the north of Ireland could object to? Is there one grievance which could be remedied in the north, to which the Catholics would object? They have no inconsistent pretensions, no clashing interests. The concessions to be made to the different parties are not inconsistent; the one party will not repine at the satisfaction which the other obtains. Who, then, would be dissatisfied by such concessions? Not the aristocracy, for I will not call it by so respectable a name. And

* See Vol. 18, p. 478.

is that miserable monopolising minority to be put in the balance with the preservation of the empire and the happiness of a whole people? The Irish wish to have a reform, upon an extended scale; they desire an extension of popular rights. But may there not be a conciliation and compromise? In the declaration of the people of Belfast, I see that they do most distinctly state, that they conceive all the benefits of freedom may be enjoyed under a government of King, Lords, and Commons. What, then, is it that the people wish for? They wish the House of Commons to be differently constituted. I think them right. They desire a diminution of patronage, and they may go the extraordinary length of saying, that it is not right to have a church in all its splendour, which is applicable only to a small part of the inhabitants. But do not these things admit of temperate discussion and satisfactory compromise? What, they ask, is a constitution such as Great Britain has, according to some, and such as she ought to have according to others—a government which shall virtually express the will of the people: and if in treating with them you should fail, you will then have to resort to violent measures, you will then have to divide the people, as Mr. Burke said—not to divide the people of Massachusetts from the people of Virginia—not to divide Boston from Carolina—not, I say, to divide Ulster from Connaught, and Leinster from Munster, but you will divide the people who wish for the constitution from those who wish to destroy it. These are the divisions which I wish for. But conciliation, it may be said, will not do. If it will not, then only may we have recourse to arms. Is there a worse period for the country in point of credit and resources? I know not; but sure I am, that we cannot do worse than at the end of one war, to adopt measures to bring on another. I would therefore concede; and if I found I had not conceded enough, I would concede more. I know of no way of governing mankind but by conciliating them: and according to the forcible way which the Irish have of expressing their meaning “I know of no mode of governing the people, but by letting them have their own way.” And what shall we lose by it? If Ireland is governed by conceding to all her ways and wishes, will she be less useful to great Britain? What is she now? Little more than a diversion for the enemy. If you keep Ireland by force now, what

must you do in all future wars? You must in the first place secure her from insurrection. I will therefore adopt the Irish expression, and say, that you can only govern Ireland by letting her have her own way. The consequences of a war with Ireland are dreadful to contemplate; public horrors would be so increased by the laceration of private feelings, as to spread universal misery through both countries; the connexion is so interwoven between the individuals of the two countries that no rupture can happen without wounding the most tender friendships and the most sacred ties. Rigour has already been attempted; let concession and conciliation then be tried before the last appeal is hazarded. My wish is, that the whole people of Ireland should have the same principles, the same system, the same operation of government, and, though it may be a subordinate consideration, that all classes should have an equal chance of emolument in other words, I would have the whole Irish government regulated by Irish notions and Irish prejudices; and I firmly believe, according to another Irish expression, the more she is under the Irish government the more will she be bound to English interests.

One word or two on the subject of lord Fitzwilliam's administration. He went to Ireland, and after a short residence, was recalled. I wish to ask those who know that country best, whether the day of his departure was not a day of the greatest sorrow? That his lordship has many qualities to render him popular, I know; but his popularity in Ireland was derived from this circumstance, that he went upon the principle of concession. What happened after his departure? Those who look only superficially at events boasted that the effects which had been predicted in consequence of his lordship's recall, did not happen. The Catholic petition was rejected. I said that these appearances were deceitful, that the effects might not be immediate, but would be certain. See what has happened, and say, whether you cannot conceive that great part of the present distracted state of the country has been produced by the hopes of the people having been disappointed, and by the cup of enjoyment having been dashed from their lips. You may be now in a situation somewhat similar. The measures you have adopted may produce apparent quiet, but I warn you against premature exulta-

tation. That the present state of Ireland can afford no satisfaction, all must admit. That there is so great a part of the king's subjects as the county of Down contains, out of the king's peace and the pale of the constitution, is a circumstance which we must all lament; and should it lead to civil dissention, there is no man, I am sure, but will feel the horrible situation in which individuals would be involved, and the calamities that would be entailed upon the public. Sir, I say, therefore, try conciliation, but do not have recourse to arms, which, if once attempted to a considerable degree, cannot be remedied or recalled. In case of civil dissention, whom can you rely upon? Not upon that small party of monopolists, many of whom could not bring so many men into the field, as they bring members into parliament. I can scarcely conceive that any objection can be urged against the present motion in point of form. The interests of this country and of Ireland are the same; its affairs are conducted by ministers and the British cabinet, and it is the privilege of this House to advise his majesty. If I were to justify the measure by precedent, I might quote the case of an impeachment of the earl of Lauderdale by the English parliament, before the Union, for his conduct of the government of Scotland. But why should I speak of forms when the consequence of the discontents in Ireland may be a contest to be supported by Englishmen and English money? I therefore move Sir, "That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, that his majesty will be graciously pleased to take into his royal consideration the disturbed state of his kingdom of Ireland, and to adopt such healing and lenient measures as may appear to his majesty's wisdom best calculated to restore tranquillity, and to conciliate the affections of all descriptions of his majesty's subjects in that kingdom to his majesty's person and government."

Sir Francis Burdett said:—Mr. Speaker; I rise for the first time in this House, in order to second the motion brought forward by my right hon. friend below me. Whoever has the slightest information concerning the situation of Ireland, must concur in the propriety of that motion; but, without having been an eye-witness to the effects produced by the measures of ministers in that country, it is impossible to have an adequate idea of the magnitude of the evils arising therefrom. Who-

ever has seen Ireland has seen a country where the fields are desolated, and the prisons overflowing with the victims of oppression—has seen the shocking contrast between a profligate, extravagant government, and an enslaved and impoverished people. One person now immured within the walls of a dungeon in Dublin, I have the honour of being connected with—for an honour as well as a happiness I shall ever esteem it—by the strongest ties of friendship and affection, whom I know to be incapable of treason to his country. Good God! that treason to Ireland and the name of O'Connor should be preposterously coupled together!—as he is capable of every thing that is great, generous, and noble, for his country's good; a man whose whole conduct delineates the exact line of rectitude and honour; whose private virtues equal—they cannot surpass—the integrity of his public conduct; who is indeed endowed with every good as well as every great qualification, and of whom it may fairly be said, "Nil non laudandum aut dixit, aut sensit, aut fecit." When such men become the objects of fear and hatred to government, it is not difficult to ascertain the nature of that government. But perhaps Sir, it may be said that I speak more like a discontented Irishman, than like a true friend to the interests of England. Sir, I speak like a friend to humanity and liberty, and like an enemy to cruelty and oppression. Sir, I believe the interests of Ireland and of this country to be the same: I believe it for the interest of both countries that both should be free. What was said by a great man concerning America, is, I think, still more applicable with respect to Ireland. "I rejoice," said lord Chatham, "in the resistance of the Americans, because, if three millions of freemen may be reduced to slavery in America, that may be the means of enslaving this country." I have only one observation more to make, which is, that unless such a measure as that which is now before the House be adopted, and the House of Commons, as well as the people of this country are determined to address the throne to remove his majesty's present ministers, and also to call them to a full account before the highest tribunal known to the laws of this realm, to answer for their misdeeds—unless this is done with promptness and energy, I do not know that this country will be long in a situation in which it can be said to be

worth the saving. I therefore give this motion my determined support.

Mr. *Pitt* said:—Sir; However generally the terms of the motion of the right hon. gentleman are couched, for an address to his majesty, it is utterly impossible for any man to form his judgment on the merits of it, unless by proceeding to separate it from the various and collateral topics which he has thought proper to introduce, and without which the proposed address would, in reality, be indistinct and unnecessary. He has, in the early part of his speech, developed a subject to which I most seriously desire to call the attention of the House. The right hon. gentleman, who has made a speech on the whole system of the Irish legislature, who has argued at large upon the principles and frame of it, who has considered, in a very ample manner, its aptitude to make laws, and who has gone at length into the disposition of the people, with respect to the practical effect of these laws, began by reminding us, when he stated to the House the discontents now existing in Ireland, that it was necessary to have recourse to that period when we recognized and fully established the complete independence of the Irish legislature, as it might be known whether we gave that independence as a boon or a right—whether that measure was a concession to Ireland. There is one certain point in which we must all coincide by having recourse to that period, and the truth of which the right hon. gentleman himself cannot controvert—that whether the establishment of the independence of Ireland was a concession or a recognition on our part, it was putting Ireland in the absolute possession of independence in point of fact. He had himself, on former occasions, fully admitted and acknowledged that important truth, and to oppose it would tend to shake the authority of the parliament of Great Britain.

But, Sir, I beg leave to ask in what parliament of Ireland was it that he recognized the independence of the legislature of that country, and the necessity of which he then urged with so much force? Was it one formed on a more extensive frame than that which now exists? Did it include more persons attached to the Roman Catholic interest of Ireland than it does now, or was it more calculated to give satisfaction at a time when concessions were not made in their favour, than now when such measures have actually taken

place? Yet that very parliament, which existed at the period to which the right hon. gentleman has thought proper to have recourse, was conceived to be the national source of the most valuable blessings to Ireland. Surely he did not mean to say that, when he himself pressed forward in establishing the independence of Ireland, he was then only putting the people of that country in possession of a delusion, and that the legislature was incapable of conveying to the inhabitants of the country the enjoyment of practical liberty. The right hon. gentleman will not therefore now maintain, that, in 1782, he considered the parliament of Ireland so extremely defective in its frame and principles, that the nation could receive no essential benefit from the line of conduct then pursued by it; and if he will not say that, (and I am perfectly convinced he cannot say what would necessarily expose him to the charge of the most glaring inconsistency), I am naturally led to inquire upon what ground it now happens, that we are to come this day to vote an address for an alteration in the frame of that parliament, the superintendence of which we have entirely put out of our control by the recommendation of the right hon. gentleman and the independence of which we have unequivocally acknowledged? By what means will he make it appear, that having renounced all power over the legislature of Ireland, having formally abdicated the privilege which might have once existed, of enforcing any internal regulation in that country, having solemnly divested ourselves of all right, of whatever nature that right may have been, to make laws in any respect for Ireland: I say, Sir, by what particular means will he undertake to make it appear that it now remains for us to declare, what laws shall affect that country, and to dictate the precise modifications which he proposes to take place in the fixed principles of the legislature itself? In 1782, having given to Ireland a distinct and independent legislature, having, with every solid testimony of good faith, laid aside all pretensions to interference in the internal concerns of the nation, can any person now point out a subject to which Ireland should look with such well-founded jealousy, as the subject presented to the consideration of the House by the right hon. gentleman's motion? I am ready to admit, that the address proposed as it is, does not exactly say so; but, Sir, it conveys too much by

implication, not to call for the attention of the House in a serious manner. Let us for a moment compare it with the speech of the mover, and if we proceed upon that just and reasonable ground, it will be found to convey what ought not to be stated in general terms, but expressed clearly and fairly.

The motion submitted to the House is for an address to his majesty, that he will be pleased to take into his gracious consideration the present disturbed state of Ireland, and to adopt such healing and lenient measures as may restore it to tranquillity. But what can be the effect of such an address? Will it be maintained that the situation of Ireland has not been the frequent subject of his majesty's thoughts? Can it with the shadow of propriety be urged, that the royal mind has been at any time exempt from those considerations which may best promote the happiness of his people? What then can be the object of the address? It proposes to his majesty the propriety of adopting measures for the restoration of the tranquillity of his subjects of Ireland. But such, Sir, must be his majesty's disposition; and to what purpose will our advice tend? No man can presume to say that such is not the firm desire, as it most undoubtedly is the interest, of the executive government. During what part of his majesty's reign has there appeared any mark of neglect to the interests of the people of Ireland? On the contrary, Sir, the most solid testimonies have been given of the sincerity of his intentions to promote the happiness of that country, not by promises, not by declarations, but by deeds and acts which have been received with grateful satisfaction by the whole nation. The most minute attention has been paid to the commerce, to the agriculture, to the manufactures of the country; and what was at the time considered as the most valuable measure, the independence of the legislature was recognized beyond a possibility of doubt. The whole has been one continued succession of concessions, and to such an extent, that during the present reign, they have exceeded all the preceding ones put together since the revolution.

But, Sir, if farther concessions are demanded, if the object of the address consists in soliciting these concessions, I must contend, that while it does not precisely point out the particular measures, which are to be adopted, it is, in the

general state in which it now stands, nugatory and superfluous. If, on the other hand, the address is compared with the right hon. gentleman's speech, which indeed must be viewed as the chief ground of the motion, I maintain that it would be absurd and impossible to express propositions any way conformable to the sentiments delivered in the course of that speech. In the first place, let us consider them politically. If they mean, that the lord lieutenant of Ireland is accountable for any misconduct during his administration of public affairs there, as the servant of the crown, and it shall be urged that the control of abuses of that kind remains with this country, I answer to that—granted. If in another point of view, they go, as was in a certain degree, conveyed by the hon. baronet who seconded the motion, to arraign his majesty's ministers for gross errors and crimes committed in the government of Ireland, and to bring them to trial, I again answer—granted. But, if they are calculated to express and recommend measures which are not within the province of the executive government of Ireland, it is but fair and also necessary to ask, are these measures so recommended to be carried into execution by his majesty, who is only a part of the legislative authority of Ireland, and what must seem still more extraordinary, are they to be so adopted by the desire of the parliament of Great Britain? I beg leave to demand, whether his majesty is not bound to act in what concerns the internal regulation of Ireland, in consequence of the advice of the legislature of that country? Our assenting to the address would therefore be highly unconstitutional with respect to Ireland, and we could not for a moment entertain such an idea, without being guilty of an unjustifiable interference in the duties of the legislative and executive government of that nation. Such, Sir, is the real ground on which I oppose the address.

There certainly have been many other collateral topics brought forward, with which the right hon. gentleman has judged it proper to embellish his speech, but which do not apply to the question, and the discussion of which may do much mischief, without producing one single advantage. I will not, therefore, enter into a review of all the various statements and arguments that have been used, nor will I declare whether the right hon.

gentleman's assertions are right or wrong; but I will leave it to the justice and to the candour of the House to decide, whether any one point he has this night proposed, can be carried into effect, by any other means than by the voice of the Irish legislature? I must also observe, that he has, in the course of his speech, gone into a long historical narrative, and has attempted to show, that the Irish legislature is so framed as not to be adequate to perform its functions for the practical happiness of the people; that the principles on which it acts are radically defective, and that while it remains in its present state, the nation, or at least the majority of the nation, cannot enjoy the essential blessings of a free constitution. In answer to this, Sir, I must beg leave to direct the attention of the House to the great and important consideration, that the parliament of this country has completely recognized, and solemnly established the independence of that of the kingdom of Ireland, which is as entirely distinct, and as incapable of being controlled by us, as we are independent of them. Yet the right hon. gentleman proposes an interference in the internal concerns of those who now have as much right to dictate to us, as we can possibly have to prescribe rules of conduct to them. Does it, Sir, become us now to say, that they are not qualified to act for the good of the people of Ireland, and that they are not entitled to the confidence of their constituents?—We who told the same people upwards of fourteen years ago, that they were completely adequate to promote the public happiness, that they were framed to secure the prosperity of the country, and what cannot be too often stated, that they were unchecked by any external control to deliberate and decide on the great business of legislation! If we speak thus to that parliament (and such must be our language, if we give our assent to the address moved this night), I confess, Sir, it does appear to me the most extraordinary and singular line of conduct that can be adopted by one independent parliament against another independent parliament.

But allowing, for the mere sake of argument, that we are authorized to dictate in the manner proposed by the hon. gentleman, is it reasonable that we should proceed in the way he has pointed out on the bare suggestions which he has stated to the House? Should we, sup-

ported by assertions alone, assume the power, which by his motion he seems to suppose we possess, of watching over, and superintending the parliament of Ireland? With regard to what may be termed the practical part of the right hon. gentleman's speech, though it is very far from my wish to enter into a discussion of the various topics contained in it, yet I only follow him to show, that, by agreeing to his proposition, however you disguise it by any specious name, however you gloss it over by any artful expression, you do nothing less than attempt directly to control the legitimate authority of the parliament of another country, and to trespass on the acknowledged rights of another distinct legislative power. But, taking the right hon. gentleman's arguments in a different point of view—assuming for a moment that he has made out his case in an incontrovertible manner, and that he has fully proved to our satisfaction that the parliament of Ireland was, in the year 1782, in every respect competent to perform its functions, and is at this time directly the reverse, I wish to know what is the practical conclusion he draws from my admission; and in what manner does he propose to remove the evil which I thus suppose he has clearly made out? What remedy, Sir, does he attempt to point out? Does he give us a single idea to guide us in the execution of the task which he wishes to impose on us? It is our duty to inquire what the principles are on which he invites us to proceed; and what the precise limits are, within which the subject is to be confined. With respect to these questions—and I trust every gentleman will readily allow them to be questions, not only of great importance, but of absolute necessity, the right hon. gentleman has left us entirely in the dark; and he appears so little impressed with the urgency of them, that he has not even hinted at them in the whole course of his speech.

Having, Sir, noticed the first point to which the right hon. gentleman has called the attention of the House, I now come to the other parts on which his observations have been made, relative to the divided state and jarring interests of Ireland. He has first dwelt on the discontents of the Roman Catholics; and in the next place he has described at some length the grievances of the Protestants of the northern parts. He has, in the

redress which he proposes to make to both sides, admitted, that concessions ought to be made to both parties; and from the statements of the right hon. gentleman, who thus wishes to reconcile opposite claims, I am confirmed in my opinion that he only desires, and is eager to effect an alteration in the frame of the parliament of Ireland, as far as it may arise out of the pretensions of the Catholics, and out of the demands of the inhabitants of the north. And here, Sir, I feel myself called on to notice the declaration made by the right hon. gentleman, that he would not enter into the particulars of the respective discontents of both parties, and yet he immediately after, notwithstanding that declaration, laid before the House a minute detail of circumstances on which I will not now dwell, thinking as I do, that a discussion of that nature is more calculated to inflame the minds of many than to prove of any essential service. When he came to mention the subject of religion, which has, according to his statements, produced many of the present discontents, he certainly did not seem very solicitous to preserve the church establishment, and though he does not wish to address the throne for the adoption of any particular line of conduct, it is something singular that he should recommend a measure that must affect a great mass of private property and even injure the church itself.

Not deeming it necessary to trouble the House any longer on these particulars, and convinced, as I am, that neither we nor the crown can interfere to effect that which exclusively belongs to the parliament of Ireland, I shall make a few observations on what has fallen from the right hon. gentleman with respect to the rights of which the Roman Catholics are possessed, and also on the subject of those additional rights which it is his desire they should yet obtain. He observes that the Catholics ought to have the general right of voting, of sitting in the legislative assembly, and of filling the public offices. To this, Sir, I answer, that they are in the actual possession of every other right, but that they certainly do not possess the right of voting for members of parliament, unless according to qualifications prescribed by law. This I conceive to be the mere state in which the Catholics are placed. But, says the right hon. gentleman, enough has not been done to extend to them civil and religious liberties.

Have not concessions of the most liberal kind been made to them since the Revolution; and, during the present reign, has not every possible pledge been given to them of real affection and sincere zeal for their best interests on the part of the crown? But, Sir, it is curious to remark the detail which the right hon. gentleman proposes, even admitting that the present subject is a proper one for us to recommend to the adoption of the executive government. In this detail there unquestionably arises an inconsistency, which he will find it no easy matter to do away. He first declares that he means to satisfy the Catholics, by conferring on them the power of voting generally. But he immediately adds, that, by pursuing that measure, we shall not be able to give them any weight in point of political liberty; for, as he maintains that the elective franchise is so managed in Ireland, that it is entirely in the power of corporations to bestow or withhold it, it would consequently be impossible for them to gain any material benefit, or to obtain any political influence, even if the law, which he himself wishes to be passed in their favour, were to take place. It therefore appears evident, that the remedy proposed by the right hon. gentleman himself, must be inadequate to meet the evil which he so seriously laments. And it naturally follows, as I have before had occasion to observe, that the great end of his plan is to alter essentially the whole frame of the constitution of the legislature of Ireland. In other words, Sir, the right hon. gentleman proposes an investigation and a scrutiny into the pretensions of the Catholics of the South, and of the Protestants of the North, for the express purpose of laying down what he considers to be just principles; and then the parliament of Ireland must be new modelled and revised, in consequence of his previous inquiry. But is it reasonable to call on the parliament of England to do that very thing which must not only be condemned by the parliament of Ireland, but is not entertained in the opinion of even a considerable number of persons? Yet, Sir, this question, which calls into doubt the existence of the whole constitution of Ireland, is to be brought forward on mere surmise, and without the shadow of authority. I say, it does not come within the constitutional right which we may possess, of controlling the executive government. It certainly does not come within the possibility of any right,

which we can possess, of interfering in considerations which exclusively belong to a legislature totally separate from, and independent of us.

The other points which the right hon. gentleman has referred to, are lost, if possible, in more obscurity than that which I have just noticed. The various and clashing pretensions of the different parties are so extremely opposite, that it would be an arduous task to reconcile them. And if, in commending certain political principles which are acknowledged by the Northerners, he has in his mind principles founded on the French doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, and intimately connected with those revolutionary tenets which have produced such vast mischiefs throughout Europe, I maintain, Sir, that it would be contrary to the duty of parliament to entertain the motion of the right hon. gentleman, supported as it is by the speech which he has this night delivered. There, are, Sir, none of his considerations on which we can prudently or safely pronounce; for there are none of them which may not excite such a flame as we shall never have it in our power to extinguish. They involve objects most delicate in their nature, and dangerous in their consequences. They embrace difficulties of a prodigious extent; and on which I shall not dwell, as they have been sufficiently described in the speech of the right hon. gentleman, so as to make us shudder with a just apprehension of the dreadful effects that must result from them. I must, therefore, Sir, consider the address proposed as a blind injunction, without any specific extent or means of execution. On this short ground I oppose the motion; and with the conviction of the dangers that must arise from the adoption of it, with the solemn recognition of the independence of the parliament of Ireland, with a just sense of our duty that others may not in their turn be wanting to us, I cannot entertain a doubt but that the motion will be rejected by a considerable majority.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that the address could not interfere with the independence of the parliament of Ireland, and as he was unconvinced by any thing he had heard, he was called upon, in duty, to vote for it.

Colonel *Fullarton* said:—Whatever ideas any one may entertain respecting the merits or demerits of the present motion, it cannot fail to appear extraordinary, that

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in the actual circumstances of Great Britain and Ireland, this should be the first question brought before the House, which has any connexion with invasion, preparation, or commotion, as applicable to either country. In this capital, we are so bewildered with the diminished dignity of Abraham Newland's signature, so overwhelmed with the calamity which has befallen the bank, that we seem entirely to have forgot all idea of invasion or commotion, as if the whole body of united Irishmen were suddenly transformed into a generation of lambs, or as if the whole French nation were not less miraculously transformed into a peaceful race, like the people called Quakers. But let me ask, are we or are we not, on the eve and in the crisis of impending invasion and commotion, as respecting Ireland? If we are not, I shall beg pardon and sit down. But if we are, how preposterous is the conduct of those, who have wasted the precious moments that ought to have been dedicated to purposes of urgent preparation—who have wasted them in an idle and pernicious war of words, on subjects neither connected with invasion, preparation, nor precaution. We seem to emulate the most discordant periods of the Roman history, described by Quintus Capitolinus, when dissensions between aristocrats and democrats, between debtors and creditors, concerning non-payments and insolvency, although there were no Abraham Newlands in those days, rose to such a height, that the enemy was at the gate, and no one would stir to repel the invader. I beg to know, where is the difference between our conduct and that of the Dutch burgomasters in 1794, when they passively suffered the French to invade and occupy their territory. The Dutch burgomasters sat with tobacco pipes in their mouths; they said little and did nothing, except to counteract each other. We, it is true, sit without tobacco pipes in our mouths, and we say a great deal; but as for doing, acting, or exerting, there we are exactly on a par with the burgomasters of Amsterdam—and unless we change our conduct, we shall deserve to share their fate. I came lately from a distant part of the country nearly and locally interested in the fate of Ireland. There, things are seen through a very different medium from that which is looked through by those who have lost their way in the fogs of London. If this House persists in its present system—if one side of the

House maintains that invasion is a bugbear, and the other that it is an exaggerated apprehension—if one side neglects all efficient preparation and precaution as a work of supererogation, and the other treats all ideas of internal disaffection and commotion as a chimera, then both sides will forfeit all confidence with the public; then the calamity which has befallen the Bank of England will cease to be a primary consideration; then general Hoche with 100,000, or 200,000 Carmagnols, will find no difficulty in making good their lodgements in different quarters of these kingdoms. General Hoche will find in the province of Ulster alone, about 50,000 Irishmen united, with pikes in their hands, and with arms concealed, busily employed in secret discipline, and nightly drills, in order to qualify themselves to reinforce the French army. This is no secret; it can be none, except in London; these people have long ago communicated their force, their numbers, and intention, to the government of France. While we sit here, like silly pheasants, who hide their heads under a bush, and then think that their whole bodies are protected. It is time to put these kingdoms on a footing of impervious defence, while the delay of the French still offers us the opportunity. Let this be done, and I will venture to become responsible that this country shall obtain from France such terms of accommodation, as it will not become us to refuse. But the people of England must make up their minds on two points. The first is, that Belgium will not be restored to the Emperor, and the second, that the Rhine will be the boundary of France—otherwise the country must prepare to wage a war *ad internecionem*.

The Earl of Wycombe said, that Ireland was at this moment in an alarming situation. That was the first reason he had for supporting the motion. The next was that he did not expect any remedy would be applied to the evil by the Irish legislature. It did not appear to him that the Irish claimed any more than was just and reasonable. Instead of rigour, conciliation ought to be tried. He should have wished that the Irish parliament had been left to themselves to settle this; but that parliament had entirely lost the confidence of the people. The truth was that a majority of it was at the will of the British cabinet. With regard to the fear of the religious sentiments of the Irish Catholics, it was singular that any should be

entertained, when we knew that religion was so much on the decline all over Europe. If we did not soon interfere we might lose Ireland altogether, a loss that would be more severe to us than the loss of America.

Lord Hawkesbury thought the motion could do no good, but might be productive of every species of calamity. The Irish legislature were independent of the British parliament, and of course we had no right to interfere in the internal policy of the sister kingdom. What! were we so ignorant of human nature as not to know, that though the measures suggested were proper to be taken, our interference would be a sufficient reason for the Irish parliament rejecting them? Were the measures taken in consequence of our interference, the Irish legislature would lose the whole credit of taking them. If they should be rejected, the House by adopting the motion, would throw a stigma on the Irish parliament, and pronounce that independent legislature unqualified to discharge its functions. He was convinced that the government of Ireland was perfectly capable of managing the concerns of the nation, and that there was no necessity for our interference.

Mr. Curwen, was so far from thinking the motion mischievous, that he was of opinion the discussion would do good even if the motion was negatived, inasmuch as it would show the Irish nation, that a part, at least, of the British parliament, were mindful of their interests.

Mr. Courtenay believed, that there were in Ulster 50,000 men with arms in their hands, ready to receive the French; but not to support them. The people in that province, almost all Presbyterians had a strong spirit of liberty, and were attached to the popular, or, what had been called, the republican, branch of the constitution; yet they were not to be confounded with Jacobins and banditti.

Mr. Hobhouse said:—The principal argument employed by the chancellor of the exchequer is, that this motion is improper, because it encroaches upon the independence of the Irish legislature. But, Sir, the discontents of Ireland are of that nature that they involve the welfare and happiness of this country. Where the concern is common, how can it be irregular or unconstitutional to show a sympathy in the troubles of our sister kingdom, and a sensibility to our own interests? The right hon. gentleman seems to have pre-

sumed, that it was the object of the motion to request the king's interference exclusively of his Irish parliament. No, Sir, it only prays his majesty, to adopt, in connexion, with the Irish legislature, measures of a lenient nature, with a view to appease the unhappy spirit of discontent which prevails,

Lord *F. Campbell* thought the motion most dangerous. Were we now, after a period of 15 years, to bring into question the independence of the Irish parliament, and interfere in proceedings over which we possessed no control? It was extremely reprehensible to impute corruption to the Irish parliament; for though it might be corrupt, yet we had no right to say so. The improvement of Ireland since 1782, had been most rapid; and the general esteem in which its present governor was held, and the implicit confidence that was reposed in his government, were the best refutation of all that had been advanced to prove that Ireland was oppressed and discontented.

Mr. *Fox* made a short reply; in the course of which he said, that even if the motion were lost, the discussion would be attended with beneficial consequences, because it would show the people of Ireland, that it was not to the French alone to whom they might look for a redress of their grievances, but that there was a portion of the British House of Commons who felt for them under oppressions, and were desirous to minister to their relief. In this view of the subject, he had no hesitation in saying, that every additional vote which was given for the motion, gave an additional chance for the preservation of the peace of Ireland. The chancellor of the exchequer had asked why he, who moved the independence of the Irish parliament in 1782, should now wish to exercise a controlling power over that legislature? His answer was: in 1782, he was for giving the Irish nation what they asked, because they thought it was best for them. In like manner, he did not propose the measures which he had recommended on that evening, because he approved them, but because the people of Ireland desired them; because they were unhappy for the want of them; and because, if we persisted in denying them, a rebellion might be the consequence. And this he gave as an answer, not only to that question, but also to the objection, that he had not specified the mode in which parliamentary reform, and Catholic emancipation, ought

to be carried into execution. He did not do it because those measures ought to be taken in Ireland, and executed in a way most agreeable to the taste of the Irish nation; but there were other things which his majesty might do to quiet the discontents at present existing in that part of his dominions. Might he not dismiss from places of public trust many persons who were now at the head of affairs in that kingdom; men who libelled the character of a nation at a moment when its zeal, its patriotism, and its courage, were most eminently displayed; men, in short, whose administration might be considered as the source of those calamities with which the country was afflicted? The right hon. gentleman had alleged, that the principles of liberty for which he (Mr. Fox) contended, were not English, but French. Be it so: but if they were Irish, they were worthy of the attention of the government of that country. Even allowing them to be French (and he certainly would not recommend the introduction of French principles into this country), still it was better to countenance them than to go to war with them. The right hon. gentleman, however, was not yet tired of fighting with French principles. Were the House tired, then? Were they prepared to begin another four-years war to squander away millions of treasure, and to shed rivers of blood? If they were, then let them go on with their noble enterprise. He warned them, however, that if they warred too much against French principles in Ireland, they might, in the end, be introduced into Great Britain itself. He had long deprecated coercive measures. He had deprecated the adoption of them against America, in 1774. In 1793, he had deprecated their being employed against France; and he now deprecated the same system being followed with Ireland. Though his advice had not hitherto been followed, it was some consolation to him, that, whatever consequences might result from the conduct that was now pursuing towards Ireland, he should not have to reproach himself with not having remonstrated against it. All these measures of coercion had arisen from the same source. War had been preferred to negotiation, and force to conciliation; because, in this age of philosophy, instead of regulating our plans by a mild and enlightened policy, we had acted upon the maxims of barbarous times. He should conclude with quoting the words

of an ancient orator, which he recommended to the serious consideration of every person to whom was assigned the important task of legislation:—"Carum esse civibus, bene de republica mereri, laudari, coli, diligi, gloriosum est; metui vero et in odio esse, invidiosum, detestabile, imbecillum, caducum."

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. Curwen -	:	:	} 84
	{ Mr. Wm. Smith -	:	:	
NOES	{ Lord Hawkesbury -	:	:	} 220
	{ Mr. John Smyth -	:	:	

So it passed in the negative.

Sinecure Places and Pensions.] March 23. The Marquis of *Lansdown* took occasion to repeat briefly, the substance of the arguments he had at different times urged, to prove the necessity of an economical reform in the public offices, where abuses were notoriously prevalent to an enormous degree. He moved, that the appendix to the report of the commissioners for examining the public accounts be printed. His object was, to show their lordships the retrenchments which might beneficially be made. He was drawn to this from what he understood to have fallen from a gentleman (Mr. Rose*) who ought then to be sitting at the table, as clerk of that House, an office which had most unaccountably been converted into a sinecure; and not only that, but he understood the person in question had said, in another place, that he had received the appointment in consequence of an address of that House. He believed no such address was extant. The worthy gentleman had also said, that he considered his place to be as much his property as the duke of Bedford did his estate. Was such an assertion, in a moment of public distress, to be borne with patience? The duke of Bedford's property! Was any man in office to presume to put a sinecure, the child of gross abuse, an office held as a mere means of income for service not performed, in competition with the hereditary landed property of the noble duke, of himself, or of any man of hereditary estate in the kingdom? The idea was monstrous.

Lord *Grenville* opposed the printing of the appendix on the score of expence. He could not reply to observations made

on what was reported of the speeches of the other House of Parliament; but this he would say, that he who should set up distinctions with regard to the security of property, would begin an attack upon all property whatever.

The motion was negatived.

Debate on the Earl of Oxford's Motion for Peace with France.] March 23. The

Earl of *Oxford* rose and said:—Peace, my lords, is so imperiously called for by the circumstances of the country, that I am sure every independent peer must be desirous of contributing to the attainment of that important object. The voice of the country demands it; and I am persuaded that it may be obtained, if sought for with a sincere and honest intention. The government and people of France are no less disposed than we are to enter into an amicable negotiation. I shall take the liberty to read a few extracts from the papers upon your table,* upon which I ground my opinion that the French directory are disposed to peace. In the note, No. 2, transmitted to Mr. Wickham by Mr. Barthelemi, there is this passage:—"The directory ardently desires to procure for the French republic a just, honourable, and solid peace. The step taken by Mr. Wickham would have afforded to the directory a real satisfaction, if the declaration itself which that minister makes, of his not having any order, any power to negotiate, did not give room to doubt of the sincerity of the pacific intentions of his court."—Again, my lords, No. 7, "The Executive Directory, wishing to give a proof of the desire which it entertains to make peace with England, decrees as follows: 'The minister for foreign affairs is charged to deliver the necessary passports to the envoy of England, who shall be furnished with full powers, not only for preparing and negotiating the peace between the French republic and that power, but for concluding it definitively between them.'"—And again, No. 15, "The Executive Directory sees with pain, that at the moment when it had reason to hope for the speedy return of peace between the French republic and his Britannic majesty, the proposal of lord Malmesbury offers nothing but dilatory or very distant means of bringing the negotiation to a conclusion. Nevertheless, the Executive Directory, animated with an

* See p. 91.

* See Vol. 32, p. 1407.

ardent desire of putting a stop to the scourge of war, and to prove that they will not reject any means of reconciliation, declare, that as soon as lord Malmesbury shall exhibit to the minister for foreign affairs sufficient powers from the allies of Great Britain, for stipulating for their respective interests, accompanied by a promise on their part to subscribe to whatever shall be concluded in their names, the executive directory will hasten to give an answer to the specific propositions which shall be submitted to them, and that the difficulties shall be removed as far as may be consistent with the safety and dignity of the French republic."—And, my lords, after being irritated at lord Malmesbury's being obliged to send for fresh instructions upon almost every point, and being still more irritated at his insisting upon those terms which they had before declared they never would treat upon, the Directory in the last note says, "The undersigned declares moreover, in the name of the Executive Directory, that if the British cabinet is desirous of peace, the Executive Directory is ready to follow the negotiations, according to the basis laid down in the present note, by the reciprocal channel of couriers."—My conclusion from all this is, that the Directory is disposed to peace, but that it is determined to keep the Rhine for the boundary of France; and, my lords, it has power to do it, and you have not the power to prevent it. You must, therefore, either make peace upon these terms, or persist in the war, which is certain ruin. I therefore move,

"That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, humbly to represent to his majesty, that in the present most critical and alarming situation of the country, this House holds it to be its bounden duty to apprise his majesty of his own danger, and the ruin and confusion which threaten the whole nation.—That the shock which has been lately given to public credit, must, from the peculiar nature of our commercial system, deprive us of those means whereby we were enabled to hold so high a rank among the nations of the world; unless the country is speedily relieved from its present enormous expenditure, and its future prosperity ensured by an immediate, sincere, and lasting peace.—That this House begs leave humbly to represent to his majesty, that upon a considerate and impartial review of the whole of the late negotiations, this

House sees with concern, that that negotiation was broken off by the conduct and demands of his majesty's ministers, and not by a want of disposition for peace on the part of France.—That in answer to the impolitic note delivered by Mr. Wickham, the Executive Directory declare, that "Yielding to the ardent desire by which it is animated to procure peace for the French Republic, and for all nations, it will not fear to declare itself openly. Charged by the constitution with the execution of the laws, it cannot make or listen to any proposal that would be contrary to them. The constitutional act does not permit it to consent to any alienation of that, which, according to the existing laws, constitutes the territory of the republic.—That it is impossible his majesty's ministers could have misunderstood this declaration, for in the note signed Downing Street, there are these words: 'To a demand such as this is added an express declaration, that no proposal contrary to it will be made, or even listened to.'—That six months after this his majesty's ministers again made overtures of peace, but in so ungracious a manner that doubts might have been reasonably entertained of their sincerity, and after a variety of trifling disputes, unworthy a great nation, when the happiness of millions was depending, his majesty's ministers demanded and made as their *sine qua non*, those very terms which, before they began the negotiation, they knew would not be made or even listened to.—That, under all these circumstances, this House humbly and most earnestly entreats his majesty to enter into an immediate negotiation upon such terms as France is likely to listen and accede to, and in such manner and through the medium of such men as shall leave no room to doubt the pacific intentions of his majesty.—And this House begs leave humbly to assure his majesty, that it entertains no doubt of the success of such a negotiation, and that it feels confident, that after his majesty shall have been graciously pleased to restore to his people the blessing of peace, such retrenchments and wise regulations may be adopted by the legislature as will relieve the people from their burdens, remove every cause of complaint of their being unequally represented, restore to them their ancient, venerable, and free constitution, and thereby re-establish public spirit and public confidence, and ensure to his majesty the affections of his

subjects, the glory, prosperity, and happiness of his future reign."

Lord *Grenville* said, that it was quite unnecessary to reply in any detail to the extraordinary string of propositions their lordships had just heard. With respect to the prominent feature in the motion, that which respected the negotiation for peace, it was a subject which the House had recently discussed and solemnly decided upon. In this view he would move, that the address of the 30th of December last, be read; which contained every necessary argument against that part of the motion; and it would be seen, that so far from the negotiation being terminated by this country, it was insolently and abruptly broken off by the French government. The address having been read,

The Duke of *Norfolk* wished that this address might go to the throne, as without the adoption of such a motion, there was but little probability of obtaining peace. The secretary of state had grounded his opposition to the motion on its inconsistency with the address of December last, but was there any thing to prevent a grave assembly from reconsidering its former resolutions, especially as new motives had since occurred which affected the commercial credit of this country, and its ability to carry on the war. He must condemn the conduct of administration in shackling lord *Malmesbury* when he was sent to treat, especially considering that France was pre-determined, at all events, not to part with Belgium. He charged ministers with indulging a spirit of intrigue, when the welfare not only of this but other nations of Europe was concerned, and thought that it should now be clearly understood on what principles this country was disposed to make peace. He must condemn administration for refusing to treat for peace after the taking of Valenciennes. France had as good a right to insist on the retention of Belgium, as this country had to retain Canada in 1763, or the Cape of Good Hope in any treaty that might now be agreed on.

The Earl of *Morton* deemed it incumbent on him to resist the motion, with a view to the consistency and dignity of their lordships proceedings. What would be said, should they agree to the proposed address, after having so recently adopted the resolution just read by the clerk? He could not agree that such a change had taken place, as to warrant our acquiescence in such an impolitic and dis-

graceful proposition. It would, in fact, be suing for peace, and such a line of conduct, it was well known, was not the readiest way to achieve that desirable end.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* lamented to see a motion of such importance passed over in the shuffling way in which the ministers seemed inclined to treat it. What a reference to the address of December, as if that were an answer! That address, to say no more of it, was hurried through the House with indecent haste. Time had not been given to noble lords at any distance to attend it. He, for one, was prevented from attending. Surely he was not implicated by an address so obtained. He called upon them to think of the new situation of this country; as well as of France. Surely, after the measures of distress which we had lately been obliged to recur to, it could not be said that we ought to adhere to the determination of the 30th of December, or of any former period. Every moment increased our difficulties. It was idle, after the shock which had been given to public credit, to talk of half measures. Nothing short of making bank-notes a legal tender, with all the calamities incident to this step, could be effectual. The minister must know it; however he might coquet on the occasion, it must come to that: he only waited perhaps, to have the call from the public. If so, he was ready, for one, to make the call, and to take his share of the responsibility. That alone could give us time to look about us, to retrench from the smallest fee up to the highest emolument, to cut the skirts of every office, and to save in every department. How was this to be done except by peace? He had no ambition to be the maker of that peace. God knew, ministers had reduced the country to a situation as to make such an office by no means enviable to any man. At the same time he did not despair of the country, but the longer the system of war was pursued, the difficulties in the way of peace would increase. It was by reviving the balance of trade, by retrieving commercial credit, by restoring confidence, and, above all, by peace, that the dangers which threatened this country were to be averted; and, provided peace was obtained, he cared not by what instruments. He wished the present ministers might accomplish this point; but if they avowed they knew not how, it would become them to surrender the task to those who did. He referred to the correspon-

dence of lord Malmesbury, and observed, that it was impossible to form a right judgment of the steps taken in that negotiation; since only a part of that correspondence was laid before the House, and the instructions and intentions of ministers were kept back. Without this knowledge it was impossible to say which was the unreasonable party; but if it clearly appeared from documents, that the fault rested with the enemy, it would unite the hearts and hands of the people of this country.

Lord Boringdon saw no reason to doubt the sincerity of ministers: to him it appeared, that the charge of insincerity fell upon the French Directory. What strengthened this opinion was, the letter written by the Danish ambassador at Paris, who might be considered as giving an impartial judgment. However much he wished for peace he could not approve of the motion, which went to state the distresses of the country, and to depress the spirit of the people, too much depressed already; nor could he approve of the wording of the motion, which seemed more like the minutes of the Executive Directory, than the language of a British House of Peers.

The Earl of Guilford said, that from the arguments used that night, it appeared, that ministers pertinaciously adhered to the opinion which they had held on the 30th of December, and were resolved not to enter upon any negotiation for a peace which should not make the surrender of Belgium a *sine qua non*. He who had, during the whole war questioned the sincerity of their endeavours to make peace, must own that they were consistent in acting upon the address of December, since they had thereby secured themselves from the means of negotiating any attainable peace, and called upon the House to declare, that they would not enter into negotiation for any peace that they were likely to obtain.

Earl Spencer resented the idea that ministers were not sincere in their wishes for peace. A reference to the papers on the table would show, that the proposals were not given as an *ultimatum*. He thought the adoption of the motion, instead of accelerating peace, would retard it, as it would be holding out to France and to Europe, that we were willing to make peace upon any terms.

The Earl of Oxford said, that the only intelligible argument which had been urged

against his motion was, that it was calculated to expose the distresses of the country to the enemy. He demanded whether his motion was likely to do this in any comparison with the order of council which the ministers had recently issued, and the sentence they had thereby issued against our credit as a nation? All that had been said against his motion, so far from shaking his opinion, confirmed him in the necessity of the measure he had had the honour to advise. He must not be told that his address was improper to be carried to the throne, since there was not a sentiment in it that he had not taken from the very words of his majesty. The best reply, therefore, that he could make, would be to read a few passages from his majesty's admired speech at the close of the American war.—His lordship here read the said speech;* having done which, he added—Here, my lords, you see his majesty giving up America, and sacrificing every consideration of his own to the interest of his people; and am I to be told that Belgium is of more importance to England than America? For the fate of India, I at this moment tremble. Where is the wisdom, prudence, and foresight of ministers with respect to that country? India, I fear, will ere long, be lost to England. From your blind confidence in ministers, you will live to see this once vast and glorious empire fall to pieces in their hands. The speech I have just read, is the best reply that I can make to the injurious insinuations against my motion.

The Duke of Bedford said, that there were now circumstances that powerfully called for the specific interference of the parliament, for it was only by the specific interference of parliament that they could cherish any hopes of forcing ministers to procure for the country the blessings of peace. To offer terms of peace was not to sue for it. But he could make it manifest from the papers on the table, that ministers had not sought for it in a way that could prove them to be sincere. When they called for a *contre-projet*, they had expressly declared, that the surrender of Belgium was a *sine qua non*. But what demonstrated the insincerity of ministers was, their not investing their ambassador with intelligible powers: he was incessantly dispatching couriers for instructions: when called on to present his terms, he had none to offer: he must first consult his court, and he at length

* See Vol. 23, p. 204.

made a *sine qua non* of a matter which they had previously declared they would not concede as a principle. They proved, then, their insincerity by not adopting an attainable ground, and assuming practicable principles. From the bottom of his heart, he believed, that ministers could not negotiate a peace upon terms so good as this nation had a right to expect, and as other persons of more sincerity and capacity, were likely to obtain.

The Earl of *Carlisle* said, that when he was young it was a doctrine in that House, that upon every gracious communication from the sovereign, no time was lost in approaching the throne with an address of thanks. Were the times so changed as to make their gratitude and loyalty a matter of charge and suspicion? When he was young too, it was a notion, that all men thought peace better than war, and that when suspicions were entertained of the sincerity of ministers, the reasons of doubt and jealousy were in decency stated. Such was the practice when he was young. He professed upon his honour, he could not conceive a reason for suspecting the insincerity of ministers in their wishes for peace.

The Earl of *Coventry* said, that the House could not agree to the motion, without being guilty of the grossest inconsistency. It was obvious, that the country would be in a situation of perpetual danger, if the Netherlands were suffered to remain in the hands of France. He was old enough to remember when France was permitted to retain Lorraine and Alsace, which was at the time a matter of great public uneasiness. How much more, then, ought the people of this country to be alarmed at the idea of the Austrian Netherlands being suffered to remain in the possession, or even under the influence, of France?

The Earl of *Warwick* opposed the motion, because he was confident ministers would take every opportunity of procuring peace upon as good terms as possible.

The Earl of *Darnley* also opposed the motion, because he saw no good that could result from it, but much ill. The public mind was sufficiently agitated already, and he could not consent to give them fresh uneasiness.

The House divided: Contents, 16; Not-Contents, 52.

List of the Minority.

Duke of Norfolk, Duke of Bedford,

Marquis of Lansdown,	Earl of Shaftesbury,
Earl of Derby,	Earl of Buckingham-
Earl of Guilford,	shire,
Earl of Thanet,	Lord Lovel and Hol-
Earl of Albemarle,	land,
Earl of Oxford,	Lord Holland,
Earl of Suffolk,	Lord King,
Earl of Cholmondeley,	Lord Say and Sele.

Debate in the Lords on the Practice of Imprisonment for Debt.] March 27. The Earl of *Moir* rose to move for an inquiry into the practice of Imprisonment for Debt. He regretted the absence of the learned lord who usually sat upon the woolsack, and would not have brought the subject forward on that account, had his intention been to move for any alteration in the existing laws. All he meant was, to move for a committee of inquiry. It was an observation of lord Coke, that laws should be of such a nature as to secure for themselves the most reverential obedience. The debtor and creditor laws he considered as failing in that particular, and, in order to substantiate his opinion, he appealed to the mode in which arrests by mesne process and executions were conducted. In the case of arrests by mesne process, the unfortunate debtor was thrown into gaol, without the debt having been proved, and without being brought to trial, for a considerable time. He might lie seven months in prison before the declaration of the plaintiff was given in, and might remain five months longer in gaol before the suit came to a trial; and all this long imprisonment was inflicted merely upon *ex parte* evidence, the prisoner in the mean time having neither provision made by law for his sustenance nor clothing; nay, even after a trial, by the existing laws he could not be liberated, except by suing for his enlargement, which required means not perhaps in his possession. The unfortunate debtor, therefore, in these respects, stood in a much worse situation than the felon accused of the most atrocious crimes.—He next adverted to the state of the law respecting executions, which, he contended, made no difference between the fraudulent and the unfortunate debtor, and which was equally injurious to the interests of debtor and creditor. It was well known that the creditor often proceeded against the unfortunate debtor to the utmost severity of the law, with a view to torture the compassion of his relations or acquaintances into a subscription for his relief; a species of persecution which, in a well regulated

country, certainly ought not to be tolerated. About 130 persons were liberated from gaol every year, by the application of the funds of a charity instituted for that purpose, who were kept in confinement merely from the want of the means of suing for their groats. It was also notorious to every one, that the greatest abuses were committed by low attornies, gaolers, and turnkeys, which the law in its present shape could not possibly prevent, and which might not come to the knowledge of the judges, or reach the ears of those authorized to punish such abuses. He believed from his heart that the authors of such abuses were never screened by the learned lord (Kenyon), now upon the woolsack, and that the aspersions contained against that learned lord in an anonymous letter which had been sent to him, and which the learned lord had put into his hand since he came into the House, and permitted him to mention to their lordships, were scandalous and untrue. There was no man who knew the learned lord's character, and who could not have observed without admiring the uniform steadiness and integrity of the learned lord's judicial conduct, who would not join him in that opinion; at the same time, if abuses did exist, they ought to be remedied; and the best mode of remedying them, was to remove the pretext under which they were practised. His lordship concluded with moving, "That a Committee be appointed to inquire into the practice and effects of Imprisonment for Debt."

Lord *Kenyon* rose, and with evident agitation said, that when he came down to the House that day, he did not know whether he should not be dragged to their lordships bar as a criminal. He begged their lordships indulgence, therefore, while he expressed his injured feelings. It was most true, that the personal accusation which had been alluded to in the latter part of the speech of the noble lord, and which had been conveyed in an anonymous letter, had been sent to him, and had equally excited his grief and indignation; grief, that there should be a man in the kingdom who should for a single moment, suppose him capable of the conduct charged upon him in the letter alluded to, and barefaced enough to put such an accusation against him upon paper, without affording him an opportunity of convincing that man, whoever he might be, how absolutely groundless every particle of the

accusation was. It called to his recollection a case which had lately come before him in his judicial capacity, in which Mr. Bosanquet, though not called upon to do so, had come forward and vindicated his character from an unjust aspersion, of having sold places of emolument, of which he had the patronage as a director of the East India company. Though he was not now upon his oath, he spoke under a sense of the duty which he owed both to God and man, and he took that opportunity of solemnly declaring, as he hoped for salvation at the day of judgment from that all-good and beneficent Being, to whom he was to answer for his conduct in this life, that every syllable of the accusation was utterly false; that he never had received any profit or emolument from the abuses which had been mentioned, and which, in the letter alluded to, were said to be sanctioned by him in his judicial capacity, on account of the profits arising from them, which he was represented as avariciously sharing with gaolers, turnkeys, and others. Under his present feelings, however, he most earnestly beseeched, nay, he implored the House, to appoint a committee to inquire into his conduct, and he pledged himself to give evidence before that committee of what he had now most solemnly asserted. That in the lower departments of the law there were many bad men, who practised upon the distress and miseries of their fellow-creatures, he knew but too well, and to such men he always opposed himself.—He would now proceed to state his objections to the motion. In the first place, he laid it down as a principle, quoted from lord Coke, that credit would be sparingly given, where there were not the means of enforcing payment of the debt. He insisted that the law of arrest, as it at present prevailed, had conduced in an essential degree to the increase of commerce and the extension of trade: that if the security it afforded the creditor was weakened, it would produce the most serious consequences. The mode of inquiry by a committee appeared most objectionable, as it would bring the whole code of our laws into discussion, and give rise to the projection of new schemes without end, which could do no good, but might be productive of infinite confusion and mischief. The bankrupt laws, as they were now executed, afforded protection to the honest but unfortunate debtor. With respect to the delays which had been insisted on, he had assisted juries in the de-

cision of about a thousand causes annually, and had found that the delays, when they did arise, were advantageous instead of being injurious to the debtor. It was impossible altogether to prevent abuses; but when they came to his knowledge, they should never be countenanced, nor the authors of them suffered to go unpunished. He said, he must leave off where he began, and most earnestly beseech their lordships to appoint a committee to inquire into his conduct, that such a miserable man as himself might be relieved from his present feelings, and be enabled to clear his character from most foul and unmerited aspersion.

The House divided: Contents, 21; Not-contents, 37.

Debate on the Earl of Suffolk's Motion for the Dismission of Mr. Pitt.] March 27. The Earl of Suffolk rose, to make his promised motion. He said, he was one of those who stood altogether unconnected with any party, who had nothing to ask nor to expect, and who was actuated solely by a wish to do service to his country. The times were now become so serious, and the situation of the country so truly critical, that it became the duty of every man in that House to speak his sentiments without reserve. Two sessions ago, he had taken the liberty of freely stating his opinion relative to the situation of the country, and his advice then was, that we should boldly look it in the face. He had proposed at that time, that it should be put in an immediate state of defence; that a very extensive encampment should be formed in a central situation, as well as small ones all along the coasts, and that carriages of a particular construction should be provided, and ready for the most speedy conveyance of troops, stores, and provisions, from one post to another throughout the kingdom, as the exigence of circumstances might require. Since that time great preparations had been talked of as necessary; but little effectual had, in his mind, been done. His lordship then adverted to the treatment by ministers of those gallant veterans who had distinguished themselves in fighting the battles of their country. The first he took notice of was the late lord Rodney, who, in return for one of the most signal victories that had ever graced the annals of this country, had been left in a state of poverty, and who, had it not been for the

protection afforded by his peerage, would, in all likelihood have ended his days in a goal. He next took notice of the treatment experienced by lord Howe, who, in return for as brilliant a victory as ever was heard of, had received no remuneration whatever, but the thanks of the two houses of parliament. Something farther indeed, had been promised him, but was afterwards bestowed elsewhere. He acquitted the noble duke whose shoulders were graced with the ribbon which had been once allotted for that gallant officer, of any intention to deprive him of this mark of royal favour. He placed it to the account of that minister, whose whole life, since he became such, had been one continued system of duplicity. Another veteran commander (sir Charles Grey), had received such treatment from ministers, that on being asked to go out again he refused, unless the king should positively lay his commands on him to go; but no consideration could again induce him voluntarily to entrust his honour in the hands of such men as the present ministers. The recall of earl Fitzwilliam from the government of Ireland could be mentioned only in the strongest terms of disapprobation. He next dwelt upon the impropriety of having formed connexions with foreign courts, by which so much of the wealth of the country was drained away, that it was reduced to a state of bankruptcy. The duplicity of those courts, particularly as it was displayed in the treaty of Pilnitz, should have been a sufficient ground to prevent such connexions. The miserable situation to which the nation was reduced by an obstinate perseverance in one of the most calamitous wars that ever was carried on, required the exertions of every friend to his country to restore it, if possible, to a situation of peace and security. This could not, in his mind, be effected without the removal from power of one person, who might be considered as the author of every measure that had brought on such a train of misfortunes. A language had frequently been used, tending to throw an odium on those who spoke their minds freely on the state of affairs, by insinuating that they were friends to commotion, and to the principles of the French. This sort of insinuation he reprobated in severe terms. He asked how any man in the world could suppose that he could be so lost to all sense of honour, to the reverence and respect he owed to

a long line of ancestors, and to the paternal affection he had for his children, as to countenance any principles which might be subversive of those honours and that rank which he had received from his immediate ancestor, and was bound to transmit unimpaired to his posterity. Such an argument was absurd on the face of it. The situation of the country was become truly alarming; and it was certainly a matter of the highest importance, that its protection should no longer be left in the hands of that man, who had hitherto shown himself so totally incapable in every respect, except in the arts of deception and delusion. He had now fulfilled what he conceived to be his duty to himself, to his family, to his king, to his country, and to posterity; and should conclude by moving, "That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to dismiss from his councils a minister, viz. the first lord of the treasury, whose pernicious and unconstitutional measures no longer entitle him to the confidence of the nation."

Lord Grenville opposed the motion, because the noble earl did not appear to him to have founded his arguments against the person so particularly pointed out by it, nor against the conduct of administration in general, upon facts sufficiently substantial to bear a motion of that nature. In regard to the first lord of the treasury, when his rank and situation in life, when his own personal connexion and known affinity with, and his high friendship and esteem for that right honourable person were considered, however partial, or however interested his vindication might be deemed, he could not decline entering into a vindication, if a vindication could be necessary, of the measures of which he stood accused. So far as his right hon. friend was concerned in the neglect or failure of any circumstance tending to promote the public welfare, he was confident the neglect and failure were attributable only to those errors to which human nature was at all times liable, to those accidents which no human prudence could prevent, or to those dispensations of Providence which no human wisdom could control. One of the first accusations which the noble earl had brought forward against his right hon. friend was a charge of having injured the public cause by removing some officers from the public service, to make

room for others more serviceable to his views, on whom he wanted to bestow public honours and emoluments; and of neglecting to reward the meritorious skill and bravery of others, in the manner which the nation wished for, and their own services and talents had deserved. The first charge was the neglect of lord Rodney. Now he by no means agreed with the noble earl, that lord Rodney had been neglected: for his majesty had graciously honoured him with a peerage, and he constantly received that veneration and regard from every person, which his bold and successful exertions in the service of his country so well deserved. If occasions did occur when his majesty found it difficult to employ all the talents, ardour, and activity of individuals, according to their zeal and deserts, the cause was imputable to the vast quantities of ability and energy in the nation which rendered it difficult where to make a preference, rather than to any forgetfulness of their services. The peerage given to admiral Rodney, however, was not the only act of remuneration; for there were certain pecuniary grants also, sufficient, perhaps, with economy, not only to have secured the possessor from inconvenience, but to have supported his title with becoming splendour. As to the charges respecting sir Charles Grey, and earl Howe, he had never heard the anecdotes which the noble earl had related till that evening, and, from what he understood of the subject, he was apprehensive the noble earl laboured under some mistake. As to connexions with foreign powers, the treaty of Pilnitz, both within and without doors, had long been a matter of misapprehension and abuse, and, like many other transactions, had been invidiously misrepresented to calumniate administration, though the fatal consequences of that calumny involved the happiness and tranquillity of the country. He hoped, from what he was now going to relate, that those misrepresentations would cease, and all farther declamation against ministers for their supposititious share in the fabrication of that treaty, be disclaimed. The treaty of Pilnitz originated with the courts of Vienna and Berlin, and was signed, sealed, and ratified, without the participation, and even without the knowledge of the British cabinet.—So much for particular articles. In reply to the more broad and general declaration, that such connexions

were formed with foreign courts as drained away the wealth of the country, and reduced it to a state of bankruptcy, he had only to recall their lordships' recollection to the flourishing state of the finances of the country, to the extent of our commerce, and the receipts of our customs. Some check and embarrassment in the concerns of public credit had been recently experienced; but he conceived it highly improper to involve that circumstance with the present question, especially since it was already in a stage of discussion, upon the result of which their lordships would hereafter be called to decide. But, to refer to the connexions which subsist between Great Britain and foreign powers, whatever might be the alleged duplicity and perfidy of those powers, the truth of which, if necessary, perhaps, he might be likely, in some degree at least, to dispute, he trusted there could be no doubt, no difficulty, no dispute, concerning the integrity and candour of Great Britain—her faith and honour were never so high, never so much revered and relied on, as at the present moment. He now came to the consideration of the conduct of the war. That our allies had not been so successful as we might have expected; and that such accidents as were incidental to all wars had happened, he was also ready to admit; but whatever might be the misfortunes of our allies, he hoped all parties would allow that the exertions of this country had been unparalleled in the page of history, and that they had been attended with unparalleled success. Our naval victories had been more brilliant than those of any former age or country, and therefore it appeared peculiarly hard, that all the honour, all the praise, and all the glory should be reaped by individuals, while all the censure, all the shame, and all the responsibility were thrown on ministers. Let the success of the war, however, be what it might, he was convinced, that if the war had not been undertaken, the religion of the country would by this time have been overthrown; the laws, which were our pride and our protection, have been trampled on; the sacred institutions of our ancestors destroyed; all rank, property, and distinction laid waste, and our glorious constitution totally extinct.

Lord *Hay* praised the conduct of the war, and said, that the brilliant successes we had met with far surpassed those of

any former period. He should therefore give the motion his decided negative. With regard to what had been said of lord Rodney's remuneration, the present ministers were not in office in 1782, and he could answer for it that lord Rodney's family were perfectly satisfied with the provision that had been made for them since his death.

The Earl of *Suffolk* desired to retract part of what he had said relative to lord Rodney. He believed the pension was rightly stated by the noble lord. Still, however, it was certain that brave officer was afterwards, from a variety of lawsuits, reduced to a state of great poverty, and his body had been seized upon, and denied the rights of burial.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* said, that he was in office when admiral Rodney signalized himself, and that every thing which could be construed liberal and just, was done upon that occasion.

The Duke of *Norfolk* disapproved of the measures of administration, which, he contended only required to be fairly and critically examined, to be universally condemned. The noble secretary had asked, where were the proofs? That question was easily decided. The proofs were every where. They presented themselves to every eye, and made an impression upon every heart. They composed a living epitaph on the folly and infatuation of ministers, and, in the language applied to the memory of sir Christopher Wren, for that astonishing piece of architecture, the cathedral of St. Paul, he might exclaim—"Si monumentum quæris circumspice."

Marquis *Townshend* said, that the country was by no means in a dangerous situation, and that the war had been carried on with the most brilliant successes. He was surprised to hear noble lords speak in such desponding terms of the situation of affairs.

The Earl of *Warwick* was convinced that the gloomy and exaggerated representations of the state of the country given in parliament were attended with the worst effects. He lamented extremely that noble lords should come down to that House merely to draw dark pictures and give a desponding account of our situation. There was a French party in this country, and it was possible that there might be a French party in parliament. Such pictures, therefore, as he had alluded to, could only serve to animate hostile dispositions. If there was any just ground

of complaint, he was convinced that the people would obtain their right, if they made their complaints known in a lawful and constitutional manner. But it was not the proper way to solicit with arms in their hands. Such was the manner in which the Irish insisted upon the redress of their grievances. He did not view our situation on the dark side, which some liked to contemplate. A change in dress had lately been introduced in that House, and some might wish to have a crop administration. He should vote against the motion.

The Earl of *Derby* said, it had been insisted on that no proofs had been brought forward, and that no reasons had been given for the present motion. He did not conceive it to be necessary to state particular reasons for such a motion. The notoriety of the circumstances superseded the necessity of detail. It was said that a people with arms in their hands did not deserve any favour; but had not the conduct of administration fomented the discontents of the people of Ireland? Could the distress of the country be imputed entirely to accidental circumstances. Was it not rather the natural consequence of the profuse expenditure, and the accumulated debt which the administration had occasioned. He considered the cause of these disasters to be with ministers, and should therefore give his support to the motion.

The Earl of *Romney* said, that for several months past, it had given him the greatest concern to hear persons on all sides, talk of the situation of the country in the most desponding manner. For his own part, he thought very differently of it, and was certain there was nothing wanted to restore it to its former strength and power, but active energy. He had argued on this head with many of his friends in vain, till at length he was obliged to tell them in a laughing way, "Well, enjoy the comfort of being ruined, if you will have it so." He nevertheless regretted the expressions used, with regard to our situation, as they were calculated to produce no good effect here, while they were received with pleasure on the other side of the water. He thought the situation of the country not worse than it had been at the end of last war. Our allies had lost, but we had gained in the contest. He did not see any cause of apprehension. With regard to the conduct there might have been some faults, but great allowance should be made

for the extraordinary nature of the war, and the desperate efforts of the enemy. Perhaps it would have been as well to rely for defence upon our wooden walls. He thought that the minister should have carried the loyalty loan a little farther; for he was convinced that a great deal more might have been subscribed which would have prevented the present difficulties, and been of the utmost importance in inclining the enemy to pacific measures. If the country was really harassed and distressed in any thing like the manner described, he conceived it to be the duty of every Englishman to contribute his assistance to relieve it. He had a plan to suggest which he was convinced would be of great advantage; it might be considered absurd and quixotic, and he might be laughed at and ridiculed for having thought of it; he would nevertheless submit it as it had occurred to his mind. He thought that every man ought to come forward and contribute a voluntary gift, to the extent of his ability, to the public exigency. He himself would subscribe 5,000*l.*; and, he thought there would easily be found a hundred thousand individuals, who would subscribe their 100*l.* each, so that upon a moderate computation 10 millions might be obtained. He proposed that this should be paid by instalments. For instance, he would commence on the 1st day of January 1798, and pay 500*l.* a month, so that in ten months he should have paid the whole. Each subscriber to do the same, according to the sums respectively subscribed, even so low as 50*l.* The whole of this money to be subject to the control of parliament. Such a measure, if carried into execution, would convince the enemy of the spirit and resources of the country, and would counteract any impression which might be made on the French government to our disadvantage, by the desponding ideas of some as to our situation, or by the warm language of others on the conduct or mismanagement of our ministers.

The Earl of *Moira* said, that the mismanagement of ministers had brought us to our present lamentable situation, and they could not too soon be removed. The war had been misconducted, from the beginning, in the most shameful manner. The wealth and resources of the country had been lavishly expended in making conquests of distant settlements, when, instead thereof, the French should have been attacked with all our force

nearer home. If this had been done, neither Belgium nor Holland would at this moment have been in possession of the enemy. The plan of the noble lord was certainly a generous one, and might, produce a considerable sum. He did not know, however, how far the House of Commons would approve of money being raised for the purpose of carrying on the war, through any other medium than their own. He should give his hearty assent to the motion.

Earl *Spencer* said, that before ministers were blamed for the condition of the country, it was incumbent to show, that the war could have been avoided, or that more could have been done to obtain peace than ministers had done. He would not enter into an examination of military affairs; but our navy had never been more successful.

The Earl of *Carlisle* said, that the finest opportunity of forcing the enemy to make peace had been lost by the conduct of the Admiralty, which had given very absurd orders to admiral Colpoys. Had we destroyed the Brest fleet, we should soon have got out of the war. It was certainly the fault of the Admiralty that we did not destroy that fleet; and this he would always maintain till he went to his tomb.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* thought the Admiralty had been extremely negligent of their duty. He confessed he had no confidence in a mere change of men. He considered one punishment of a minister where it was merited, of infinitely greater public advantage than any change that could take place. He had formed this opinion both on principle and practice. He was for a strong executive and a vigilant independent legislature, mutually checking each other, and in this balance he conceived liberty to consist. The history of the changes that had taken place from the removal of sir Robert Walpole to the present day, had proved the inefficacy of changes of men. Sir Robert was removed by popular clamour at the time he was carrying that admirable scheme, the sinking fund, into execution, and the country suffered by his removal. The consequence of that change was, his successors plunged the nation into a Spanish and a French war, and dilapidated the sinking fund. At the close of the seven years war, a change also took place, and the new minister squandered 75 millions of the public

money in carrying on the very measures he had reprobated when out of place. At the end of the American war, violent clamours had been raised against the peace that was concluded, which time had proved to be ill-founded, and the person who had been most forward in that clamour would probably have come into office as one of the most popular ministers that ever was in this country, but for the coalition with lord North, which then took place. With him, therefore, a change of men was not that panacea which some considered it to be. He was for a fundamental change of system. He was for a complete acknowledgment of past error. He was for a government, conducted without influence, and whoever were ministers, if they had integrity, honour, and purity, he was not doubtful of the result. What would their lordships' property long remain worth, when millions after millions were squandered in the most improvident manner? What would the noble lord's subscription of 5,000*l.* do, when such a floodgate was opened, and when every man in office had his hand in the public purse to spend as much as he thought proper? The term "good peace," was frequently used, but he wished it could be defined. He wished to know what we were fighting for? Was it Belgium? If it was, ask the people whether they would persevere in the war for such an object. Was it for any territorial possession? He wished it to be discussed what terms would constitute a good peace. When this was known, it might be possible to proceed. He could never consent to any peace that would infer public ignominy; and if the enemy were to insist on any such conditions, it would unite every man in the country to resist their pretensions.

Lord *Grenville* said, that the natural part for England to take in the war had been properly performed. Every effort had been made, and every success obtained, regarding this as a naval and colonial war. When the exertions of the government were turned towards the continent, when all the troops our small military establishment could afford were sent to the Netherlands, then ministers were blamed for not confining their exertions to the navy and the colonies, which it was said were the proper objects of Great Britain in a war. Of late, ministers, in compliance with the public voice, had declined sending troops to the continent;

they had turned all their attention to the navy and colonies, and still they were blamed, even though they had been so successful. The noble marquis had allowed, that changes of ministers, made by popular clamour, had not always been calculated for the public good, and he had instanced the case of sir Robert Walpole; that change, however, was not less calculated for the public good than the present. But the noble marquis says, it is not a change of men, but an entire change of the principle and system of the government which he desires. A change in our system of government would throw the country into total confusion. Were not their lordships convinced of the danger of French principles, from which ministers had preserved the country? From such a change he was convinced the whole nation would recoil. It had been asked, for what was the war carried on? It was not for this or that province—it was, whether the French should possess the whole of the maritime coast of the continent opposite to this country. That was the present object. Another was, the haughty manner in which they had treated our overtures for peace. They had called for our terms, which they had rejected without offering any on their part. No minister had ever been more ignominiously treated than our's had been. His lordship said he had often heard professions of unanimity when the country was insulted; but he never had received the support of those who made such professions. He condemned the desponding language held respecting our finances, and contended that our resources were ample and abundant.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* was not surprised that the French, in the late negotiation, had shown some haughtiness. The French were men with natural feelings, and must remember and resent the abusive language ministers had used respecting them. Were we to wonder that the French entered on the negotiation with coldness and distrust, when not only the former language of ministers, but every circumstance attending the negotiation itself, gave them cause to suspect our sincerity? He would not suffer an imputation of Jacobinism to be cast on him, by the noble lord, when that noble lord must know that by a recommendation of a change of system, he meant nothing like Jacobinism. He denied having recommended a change of govern-

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ment. He only desired the present system should be changed for a constitutional system. And he would contend for a constitutional government, even though it was the fashion for ministers to insinuate, that those who recommended any change were Jacobins. He denied having any Jacobin principles about him, and asserted, that he had always advised ministers against Jacobin principles, because he was convinced they went to a community of goods, and every absurd and pernicious degree of equality. He did not believe there were many Jacobins in principle in this country; and he knew of no such practical Jacobins as his majesty's ministers. They had banished gold and silver from London, at the time when they began to be plentiful in Paris; and they had taken up the paper system when France had laid it down. Forced loans, military force, and every Jacobin project they had adopted as soon as France rejected them. They pursued a line of conduct perfectly agreeable to all Jacobins, and well calculated to promote their objects. He thought the immortal jury of 1794 had sufficiently exposed the falsehood of the pretended Jacobin plots. To the noble conduct of that jury, he did not know how many of their lordships were now indebted for the possession of their lives and fortunes. It was that jury which defeated the Robespierian system, which was attempted to be established in this country.

The Duke of *Bedford* said, he would support the necessity of a change of system in spite of the calumnies which he knew he should incur. It was his object to chase corruption from senates, and despotic principles from the councils of kings. The danger of French principles was held out. But, good God! was it the way, to guard against French principles, to ruin our own country? It had often been said that ministers had no interest in continuing the war. It might as well be said, that it never was the interest of individuals to commit errors. Ministers might feel an individual interest in continuing that system with which their power was connected. The state of the finances was alarming in the highest degree, but the danger could only be remedied by meeting it fairly. Were a peace now to take place, taxes to the amount of two millions and a half would be necessary to cover the expenses already incurred. He should give his assent to the motion.

[O]

The House divided: Contents, 15; Proxies, 2—17. Not-Contents, 86; Proxies, 18—104.

Debate on Colonel Wood's Motion for appointing a Board of Naval and Military Officers to inquire into the Defensive State of the Country.] March 28. Colonel Wood said, that under the present state of anxiety and uncertainty in which the country remained upon a subject of the first importance, it seemed to be the unanimous opinion of every gentleman with whom he had conversed upon the subject, that the public had not only an undoubted right to every information which ministers could give, consistent with safety, but that the House was the only proper channel through which such information could either be asked or obtained. As it was disgraceful for a country to be alarmed without cause, so was it equally discreditable, for a great country like England to remain in a state of inactivity, at a time when every possible exertion was required, to extricate her from her difficulties. He begged the House for a moment to consider the importance of the subject to which their attention was called—in his opinion, one of the greatest magnitude that could possibly occupy the deliberations of a great and independent nation; for whenever, in the opinion of the public, the security of the country against foreign invaders became a matter of doubt or uncertainty, till such time as the grounds of such an opinion was maturely investigated and removed, all discussion relative to internal regulations or improvements appeared to him to be frivolous and unimportant. He asked gentlemen, to what cause they believed the late universal alarm to have been occasioned, which had unsettled public credit, and which would have buried in one general ruin the Bank of England, had not the minister interposed a violent stretch of prerogative, by which it had received a temporary reprieve from destruction? It was neither the threats of invasion, nor yet any exaggerated accounts of the preparations of the enemy, that could have produced such an effect: for every man was satisfied that our own strength and resources were such, that if those to whom the safety of the country was entrusted did their duty, every attempt of an enemy must ultimately terminate in their disgrace and destruction. In his opinion, the occasion of the alarm was from a very different

cause. The people of England, saw with infinite mortification, one of the largest armaments of the present age equipped in the port of Brest for the invasion of Ireland, remain upon her coast near three weeks unmolested, and afterwards return home without the smallest obstruction; and by the kind interposition of Providence that country had been preserved from a calamity, the extent of which no man could calculate. It was painful to recollect the defenceless situation in which Ireland continued, not only during the whole of the time the enemy was upon the coasts, but for some considerable period afterwards, without any adequate force or supplies of artillery, arms, or stores; and this for months after the minister had announced to this House, not merely the preparations of the enemy, but their actual destination against that country. With such evidence of misconduct and inattention to the safety of Ireland, or else of most unparalleled misfortune in their plans for the security of that country, could gentlemen be at any loss to account for the late universal alarm which prevailed in England, upon the near approach of a similar visit, destined against the coasts of this island? Or were any so very unreasonable as to expect, that by some magical power, inattention to the security of Ireland, would beget confidence and reliance on their greater vigilance and attention towards the safety of England? The right hon. secretary (Mr. Dundas) had asserted, that the late alarm was entirely unfounded—and so far he was willing to agree with him, that it was carried to a height which neither our situation nor circumstances could possibly justify—but was that right hon. gentleman to be informed, that an alarm spreads like a contagion, to which no man could prescribe bounds? Under such circumstances, it was not the assertions of any man that could possibly satisfy the public ministers, who, in case of any misfortune, must be deeply implicated in responsibility: their reason and understandings must be convinced, that not only ministers have themselves been vigilant, but that they have consulted those able and experienced naval and military officers on whom the country rely; and that with their advice some regular plan has been adopted for the general defence of the country.—Since the late alarm, what farther proofs had ministers given of their attention to the security of

the country? Have depots of arms and stores been established in different parts, by means of which the people might be armed, and unite with the military in the event of a descent, in repelling the invaders? Have they made any progress towards assembling a strong and respectable central army for the protection of the capital, the rivers Thames and Medway, without depending upon the junction of distant detached corps, which often may be difficult, and at some times impossible? Have our ships or fleets been stationed off the enemies ports, where we understand preparations have been making, so as to intercept their supplies and to embarrass their operations? Has any provision been made for the protection of this great city, and for the support of the civil magistrates in the event of its being found necessary to move the troops towards the capital? On the contrary, have not many of the most respectable inhabitants of this great city tendered their services to government without any expense to the nation, and which, although highly approved of and commended, yet near two months have elapsed, and not one measure has been adopted likely to forward so desirable an association? Have not the number of foreigners been permitted to increase beyond the bounds of prudence and discretion? Those respectable nobility and clergy of France, who have suffered so nobly in the cause of their religion and their king, he trusted, would ever meet in this country with that degree of hospitality to which their sufferings gave them every claim; but if under the respectable name of this description of men, we admitted into our bosoms some of the most abandoned villains from the school of Robespierre, we should in such case deservedly suffer for weakness and folly. As a proof of the vigilance of ministers, the right hon. gentleman had told us, on a former occasion, that we had at present upwards of a 100,000 men in arms, and should soon have double this number; alluding doubtless, to his expectations from the supplementary militia and provisional cavalry; but if from the first 100,000 be deducted, the troops stationed in Scotland, those in the interior and western counties of England, those about the metropolis, and for the garrisons of Portsmouth, Plymouth, Jersey, and Guernsey, and with the remainder, it be attempted to protect an extent of coast of upwards of 600 miles, he would ask, how

it would be possible to assemble such a respectable central army as was absolutely necessary for the protection of the capital and its dependencies. It had been suggested, that a general array of the people able to carry arms upon the sea coasts, who, for two or three hours each week, should be accustomed to military exercise, would be the readiest economical mode of defence. Let peace come when it might, undoubtedly some more economical plan than the present for protecting the country must be devised, and none so proper as the inhabitants to defend themselves and their property. At an early period of the Revolution ministers sought for men of abilities in military science, without attending either to birth or former situation; and from a selection of such men formed a military council, by whom the whole of their operations were planned and directed, and to whom were chiefly to be attributed those brilliant successes which had astonished Europe. In 1785, when plans for the defence of the coasts, and for the protection of our dock-yards, came before parliament, a board, composed of the principal naval and military officers, was proposed as the most fit for the consideration of that subject, and was readily acceded to by the present chancellor of the exchequer.* It was at that time stated, that in times of alarm similar measures had been resorted to, and particularly in the reign of Elizabeth, during the time of the famous armada. She assembled a council of the united wisdom of her kingdom, requiring from this council a plan of defence suited for that occasion. In the present situation of public affairs, it did not appear to him that a wiser plan could be thought of. He should therefore beg leave to move, "That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, entreating his majesty to be graciously pleased to appoint a board of naval and military officers, under the direction of his royal highness the commander in chief, to take into consideration the measures which have already been adopted for the security and defence of the country, and to consult and determine upon any other measures, which may appear to them to be expedient to adopt, in the present situation of public affairs, so as thereby to dissipate and remove every unfounded alarm respecting the security of the country."

* See Vol. 25, p. 387.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, that the hon. colonel proposed an address to his majesty. Better grounds, however, ought to be given, before such a motion could be acceded to. The House had furnished the executive government with great powers; it was the duty of government, therefore, to adopt the necessary measures for the security of the country. What was it, however, that the hon. colonel wished. He had not specified any blame against the duke of York, upon whose conduct, indeed, no difference of opinion could be entertained. When his majesty had committed to him the command and distribution of the army, did the hon. gentleman suppose, that illustrious character had not availed himself of the counsels of the most skilful military officers? Had he not placed such eminent generals as sir W. Howe, sir C. Grey, sir W. Meadows, general Musgrave and others, in the command of important districts? There was no officer of great merit who was left unemployed. If the motion had any meaning, it certainly implied a charge against the commander in chief, for some improper distribution of the forces, or neglect in taking proper measures for the security of the country. And he would ask, if his majesty was to receive this address, what else could he do than to appoint those very officers as a board of inquiry, who have the command of the several districts of this kingdom? On these accounts he should move that the House do now adjourn.

Mr. *Fox* said, he should vote for the motion. At a time in which there was ground for distrust, nothing would so much tend to satisfy the people, as to prove to them that every measure had been taken for the defence of the country. With respect to the duke of York, he believed there never existed a man who gave up his whole time, and applied his whole mind, more to the duties of his station than he did; but this was not a time to give up any thing that was necessary for the safety of the country out of compliment to any person. The hon. mover wished to take a comprehensive view of the subject, to combine in it the military and naval administration. Would the secretary of state say, that upon the subject of the naval defence of the country, the first lord of the admiralty had had recourse to the advice of naval officers of experience, in the same manner as the duke of York had had recourse to the advice of

military officers? After what the House had seen, even from the papers that had been laid before them, confessedly for the purpose of exculpating a particular person; after all the alarms that had been felt, could gentlemen say, that those who directed our naval affairs had adopted such measures as were best adapted for the safety of the country?

Mr. *Courtenay* had no doubt but every measure would be pursued for the national security, as long as we had such able persons to direct the defence of the country, in conjunction with our gallant officers. He paid a tribute to the abilities displayed by lord Moira, and described his march on the continent, as a *chef d'œuvre* of military movement; a march, which had been celebrated by both Austrians and French. He trusted his hon. friend would not press the question to a division.

Colonel *Gascoyne* was against the motion because there had been no deficiency of attention stated, upon which such an inquiry ought to be grounded.

Colonel *Fullarton* said, it was undoubtedly desirable, that this discussion should be brought before the House in some form or other; because it afforded an opportunity to ministers of explaining to the public the actual state of our national defence. It was by no means sufficient that ministers were preparing the country for defence; it was essential that they should give to the public mind an impression that they were to be defended. Unfortunately the impression of late had been directly the reverse. In various parts the people conceived they were not sufficiently protected. To this impression was owing much of the calamity which had befallen the Bank of England, and also the country banks. The people conceived, that in the event of an invasion, it was more eligible to have guineas in their pockets than bank notes. Until this apprehension was removed, it was in vain to think of restoring public confidence or public credit. There was another point which tended much to the depression of the public mind, that was, the inefficacy of our naval force to protect these kingdoms from insult and invasion. It was stated by many, that the conduct of the admiralty was unexceptionable. But notwithstanding this triumphant statement, the whole naval force of England was inadequate to prevent the French from passing their holydays in Great Britain or Ireland, without invitation, and from going away again, without taking

leave This being the fact, every district should be put on such a footing of internal defence, as should enable us to give the French a proper reception on shore, as often as they failed to be properly saluted by our squadrons at sea. It was not by elocution, that public credit was to be restored, nor by harangues on the circulating medium and representative sign, which seemed at present to evade the grasp of orators and statesmen, but by wise and liberal conduct on the part of the banking and monied interest, aided by such measures of preparation and precaution on the part of government, as would effectually secure these kingdoms from apprehensions of invasion and commotion.

Mr. *Sheridan* did not like to hear the motion opposed on the ground, that every necessary measure had been taken for the defence of the country, and that it would convey a reflection on the commander in chief. If such a motion had been made in the Irish parliament before the French came to Bantry Bay, the same answer would have been given. But so far was that country from having been in a state of defence, that the French remained several days in Bantry Bay. After an instance of such deplorable neglect, the House ought not, upon the assertion of the minister, to conclude that this country was perfectly secure. There ought to have been a communication between the heads of the naval and military departments, in order that their efforts should be combined to protect the country; but it did not appear that any such communication had taken place. For these reasons he would support the motion.

Mr. *Windham* said, that the officers at present entrusted with the defence of the country, were as well chosen as if they had been appointed by a committee of that House, or in consequence of an address to his majesty. The hon. gentleman only moved for the doing of that which was done already. His motion was therefore unnecessary.

The motion of adjournment was put and agreed to.

Debate on the Non-Entry in the Journals of the Earl of Oxford's Protest. March 30. The Earl of *Oxford* called the attention of their lordships to a circumstance which while it affected him personally, involved in it a high breach of the privileges of that House. In consequence of his motion to address his ma-

jesty, with a view to a negotiation for peace, being negatived, he had come down to the clerk's room the next day to enter a Protest upon the books, stating his reasons for dissenting from the decision of the House; but to his extreme surprise he found his motion was not entered, the learned lord then upon the woolsack (lord *Kenyon*) having carried off the motion in his pocket. He therefore moved, "That a chancellor in taking away the motion of any noble lord, so that the same cannot be entered on the Journals, is guilty of a high breach of the privileges of this House; and that lord *Kenyon*, acting as pro-chancellor, is guilty of a high breach of the privileges of this House in having taken away the motion of the earl of *Oxford* on the 23d instant, and that he be censured for the same."

The Bishop of *Rochester* moved, that the standing order, No. 114, be read. It was read accordingly. The purport of it was, "That any peer in printing or publishing the proceedings of that House, or any part thereof, without the authority of the same, shall be deemed guilty of a high breach of privilege." The bishop then said, he was astonished that a noble lord, in the second year of his sitting as a peer, should undertake to teach that House its duty. When he learnt, from rumour, that the noble lord intended to make a motion complaining of a breach of privilege, he had conceived it to have been a breach of privilege committed in a most audacious manner, by a miserable newspaper. He held in his hand a newspaper called the "*Oracle or Public Advertiser*," which contained a gross libel upon their lordships, contained in a pretended account of their proceedings on a late occasion, under the head of an "Address to the Nation,"* in which lord *Grenville's* reply to

* The following is a Copy of the Publication alluded to:

ADDRESS TO THE NATION.

Portman-square, March 27, 1797.

It was my intention to have entered my Protest on the Journals of the House of Lords the day after I moved my Address to his majesty for peace, and for that purpose I went to the clerk's office, and to my utter surprise, I found that my Address had never been entered upon the Journals. Upon inquiry I was informed that lord *Kenyon* had taken it home with him. I wish, at all events, that the public should be in possession of my protest, and I hereby pledge myself to my country and to the House of Lords, that I will this day, in

the motion of the noble Earl, whose title of "Oxford, and Mortimer" was subscribed to the Protest, as it was called, that was subjoined to the introduction, was said to consist of arguments that were "poor, weak, and rude," and such as were never heard of before.—He was aware, that the custom of the newspapers to publish the debates of the House, was, in some sort, connived at; but when so audacious a misrepresentation of the proceedings was published, he had expected that the noble lord would have done what he should have felt it his duty to do, in vindication of his own honour and dignity, and the honour and dignity of the House, complained against the printer of the paper in question, for having published so aggravated and audacious a libel, and thereby been guilty of a high breach of privilege. The arguments contained in the flimsy production called a protest, and signed

my place, in that House, demand the fullest reparation for this insult, offered through one to the whole House, in this illegal and unprecedented manner.

PROTEST.

"Dissentient,

1st, "Because seeing no means of salvation for this country but by an immediate, sincere, and lasting peace, I think the Address, which I moved, March 23, 1797, calculated to produce that happy event, and that a refusal to carry that Address to the throne, tends to a continuation of this cruel war, which I hold to be certain and inevitable ruin.

2. "Because a secretary of state's moving, that an Address to his majesty on the 30th of December, 1796, should be read, is a poor, weak, and rude manner (to say no worse of it) of answering the arguments advanced in my address.

3. "Because I believe that the arguments advanced by me, have never before been touched upon, even in debates, and no attempts having been made to answer those arguments, the conclusion which the public must draw from it is, that they are perfectly unanswerable.

4. "Because it was my sincere wish that the eyes of his majesty should be opened to the dangers with which he is surrounded, and that giving peace to his exhausted subjects, and restoring to them their rights, should be his own gracious act.

5. "Because I have the highest authority for every sentiment respecting the economy and reform of abuses which I recommended, namely, his majesty's own words, in that most excellent and patriotic speech made at the close of the American war, and which I quoted in my reply.

6 "Because whenever a nation is in the si-

Oxford and Mortimer, were not worth an answer. But there was one expression in it which he could not help taking notice of. The sixth section of the Protest described the House of Commons as "the parliament of the people," which he must contend was neither legal nor constitutional language. The parliament was the king's parliament, and so the laws of the land and the constitution defined it. He mentioned this, in particular, because it showed that when rash and inexperienced young men adopted strong expressions, they were apt to mislead themselves, and to confound the true character of what they took upon them to describe. The bishop concluded with repeating, that it was against the printer that the noble earl should have come down to complain of a high breach of privilege, and not to have brought forward what, if he were not restrained by the

tuation we are in at present, it requires the united energy and public spirit of the whole nation, to re-establish its credit; and I am persuaded that energy and public spirit are only to be obtained by the public possessing their ancient free constitution, which they so justly revere: and I maintain, that, according to common law, which is common sense, and according to "the true spirit of the constitution," which is founded in wisdom, liberty, and justice, the people of Great Britain have a right, and ought, to be fairly and equally represented in that which, by its very name, is their House of parliament.

7. "Because I hold the borough system, and every other system of corruption that has of late years crept into practice, to be directly contrary to the true spirit of the constitution, and big with the most alarming evils to king and people; and that to confer the honour of peerage on men who have no other merit than that of commanding boroughs, and performing ministerial jobs, degrades that high dignity, and takes away one of the greatest motives that actuates the human mind, the hope of reward, by making it unworthy the acceptance of those men for whom it was intended; men who have rendered great and distinguished services to their country by their valour, their talents, or their learning.

8. "Because I am desirous of making this public avowal of my principles, which nothing on earth shall make me alter, and which I have learnt from the acts and writings of our ancestors, who loved liberty and understood it.

9. "Because I am resolved, whenever I see danger, boldly and independently, to the full extent of my ability, to discharge my duty to my king and country.

OXFORD AND MORTIMER."

respect he entertained personally towards the noble earl, and for the House in general, he should have called a petulant motion, grounded on, perhaps, the casual negligence of one of the first and most respectable characters in the kingdom.

Marquis Townshend could not subscribe to the doctrine, that the parliament was the king's parliament. He had the honour of deriving his seat in that House from a long line of ancestors, and had been taught to consider the parliament as the parliament of the nation, of which the crown was one estate. The House of Commons, undoubtedly, being the representatives of the people, might fairly be considered as their house of parliament.

The Bishop of Rochester said, that the House of Commons, separately considered, being the representative of the people, might be termed their house of parliament; but speaking of the parliament collectively, it was the king's parliament, and so defined by the law of the land and the constitution. The king alone could convene, prorogue, and dissolve it; and therefore, in strict, legal, and constitutional language, it could only be recognized and described as the king's parliament.

The House divided: Contents, 1; Not-Contents, 50. A resolution was then moved, and agreed to, That no entry of the proceedings be made on the Journals.

*Report from the Select Committee on the Financial State of the Country.**] March 31. Mr. Abbot presented the First Report from the Select Committee on Finance, of which the following is a copy:

FIRST REPORT.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE appointed to examine and state the total amount of the Public Debts, and of the interest and charges attending the same, as they stood on the 5th of January 1797; distinguishing what part thereof had arisen since the 5th of January 1793; and likewise of the amount of the produce, for each of the four years preceding the 5th of January 1797, of the permanent taxes which existed previous to the 5th of January 1793; and of the produce of the several taxes provided for defraying the increased charge of the public debt within the said period; and to report their observations thereon to the House; likewise to examine and state the amount of any unfunded debt or demands outstand-

ing on the 5th of January 1797; and of the expected total amount of the public expenses for the year ending the 5th of January 1798, as far as the same can now be ascertained or estimated by the several offices; together with the amount of the ways and means that have been provided to defray the same.—And who were instructed to state an account of the progress that has been made in the reduction of the public debt since the 5th of July 1786; of the amount of the sums now annually applicable thereto; and of the farther progress which may be expected to be made, as far as the same can at present be ascertained, in the reduction of the debt now existing.—And who were also instructed to examine and consider what regulations and checks have been applied, in order to control the several branches of the public expenditure, and how far the same have been effectual? and also, what increase or diminution has taken place, since the year 1782, in the number, or in the amount, of the salaries and emoluments of different public offices, and whether any, and what, farther measures can be adopted for reducing any part of the said expenditure, or for diminishing the total amount of such salaries and emoluments, without detriment to the public services,

Have proceeded to consider the matters referred to them, in the order which the House has prescribed to them for the course of their inquiries. And in this their First Report, they have entered upon the consideration of the public funded debt, and taxes, and the unfunded debt; and also of the estimates for the service of the current year, and of the ways and means which have been provided for that service; and of the progress which has been made, and may be expected to be made, in the reduction of the national debt.

I.—The Public Funded Debt.

§ 1. The total amount of the public debts, as they stood upon the 5th of January, 1793, appears to have been in funded capital, 238,231,248*l.* 5*s.* 2½*d.*

The annual interest payable thereon (together with certain annuities for terms, amounting to 1,373,751*l.* 2*s.* 6¼*d.* in respect of which no capital is above stated) was at the same period 9,205,588*l.* 8*s.* 8¼*d.*

The charges of management thereon, at the same period, were 120,277*l.* 15*s.* 6½*d.*

And the total of the annual interest and charge of the public funded debt at that period, amounted to 9,325,866*l.* 4*s.* 3¼*d.*

§ 2. The public debts which arose between the 5th of January 1793, and the 5th of January 1797, appear to have been created by the raising of 59,000,000*l.* sterling upon loans, and by the funding of navy, victualing, and transport bills, to the amount of

* For Copies of the Finance Reports of 1786, and 1791, see Vol. 29, p. 452.

7,624,896*l.* 6*s.* 1*d.* sterling; amounting in the whole to the sum of 66,624,896*l.* 6*s.* 1*d.*

And it appears that in consequence thereof, the total amount of the public debts, created between the 5th of January 1793, and the 5th of January 1797, was in funded capital 88,840,122*l.* 14*s.*

The annual interest thereon (together with certain annuities expiring in 1860, amounting to 227,374*l.* 0*s.* 10*d.*; in respect of which no capital is above stated) *£.* *s.* *d.*
was 3,139,087 13 5½

The charges of management upon the above increase of debt were 42,536 0 2½

And the total of the annual interest and charges upon the above increase of debt was 3,181,623 13 8

§ 3. The total funded capital of the public debt was therefore, upon the 5th of January 1797, 327,071,370*l.* 19*s.* 2¾*d.*

The total interest thereof, together with the annuities for terms, was 12,344,676 2 2¼

The total charges of management at that period were 162,813 15 8¾

And the total annual interest and charge of the public funded debt was *£.* 12,507,489 17 11¼

Your committee think it necessary farther to state, that in order to show correctly the complete amount of the annual charge, the sum of 1,000,000*l.* issued to the commissioners for reducing the national debt, should be added to the interest and charges of the debt existing on the 5th of January 1793; and that a farther annual sum, in respect of the 1*l.* per centum per annum on capital funded since the 5th of January 1793, payable to the said commissioners, amounting to 923,154*l.* 19*s.* 4*d.* should be added also to the interest and charges of the debt created since that period.

These being taken together viz. 1,923,154 19 4

And added to the former sum, viz. 12,507,489 17 11¼

The total annual charge of the public funded debt, including the sums applicable to the reduction thereof, as it stood upon the 5th of January 1797, was *£.* 14,430,644 17 3¼

§ 4. Your committee also beg leave to observe, that neither the amount of the stock created by funding certain navy, victualling, transport and exchequer bills, in the course of the present session, nor by the loan of eighteen millions for the service of the year 1797, are noticed in this statement; as they neither are, nor, by the course of the exchequer, could be, included in the account made up to the period marked out by the instructions to your committee.

It appears however, that the capital stock created by funding the bills, amounting to

13,029,399*l.* 8*s.* was .. 21,575,774 0 0
The loan 20,250,000 0 0

Total *£.* 41,825,774 0 0

The annual interest thereon amounts to 1,714,171 6 0

The charges of management upon the above additional debt amount to 18,821 8 0

The farther annual sum of 1*l.* per cent on this additional capital stock is 418,257 7 0

The total of the annual interest and charges, and 1*l.* per cent upon the above additional debt, amounts to *£.* 2,151,250 1 0

§ 5. Your committee, in concluding this part of their inquiries, think it right to observe, upon the total of the capital stock so created and so constituting the public funded debt;—1st. That its amount is not to be considered as if it could only be extinguished by a redemption at par; inasmuch as the progressive reduction of the national debt by the present sinking fund constantly operates, by buying up the debt according to the current price of the stocks; the effect of which they have entered into more fully in a subsequent part of this report;—

2dly. That the funded capital of the public debt includes in it the amount of the capital purchased by the commissioners for reducing the national debt;—

And 3dly. That the annual charge upon the public by way of interest, and annuities for terms, includes in it the interest of the stock purchased by the commissioners, and also of the annuities which have expired.

§ 6. Your committee think it also proper to state here, that by stat. 35, G. 3, c. 93, provision was made for guaranteeing the payment of the dividends on a loan of 4,600,000*l.* on account of the Emperor; under the authority of which statute there has been created in capital stock 3*l.* per cents 3,833,333*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* and in annuities for 25 years from 1st May 1794 230,000*l.*

II.—Taxes.

§ 1. The amount of the produce for each of the four years preceding the 5th of January 1797, of the permanent taxes which existed previous to the 5th of January 1793, appears to have been as follows:

In 1793 *£.* 13,941,891 2 4½
1794 13,909,492 6 11½

In 1795, the produce of these taxes received at the exchequer was .. 13,338,327 17 2½

But to this must be added 116,935 2 9
Which was paid by the receivers of the customs,

out of the produce of that year's revenue, in bounties to seamen; the actual produce of the taxes for the year 1795

was therefore £.13,455,262 19 11½

In 1796, the produce of these taxes received at the exchequer was .. 13,187,804 9 10½

But to this must be added for payment of bounties to seamen 52,881 14 6

And also, for payment of bounties on corn 573,418 4 9

The actual produce of the taxes for the year 1796

was therefore £.13,814,104 9 1½

Your committee think it proper to observe, that the stoppage of the distilleries between June 1795 and November 1796, must have materially affected the amount of that part of the produce which arises from the duty on British spirits. What the precise deficiency occasioned by this circumstance may be, it is not possible to state; but upon comparing the produce of the duties on British spirits in 1796, with the average produce of the same duties of 1793, 1794, and 1795 it appears that the deficiency in 1796 is 557,793*l*.

But as your Committee thought that some allowance ought to be made for the increase of the duty on foreign spirits during the stoppage of the distilleries, they proceeded to compare the actual produce of the duty on foreign spirits in 1796, amounting to 831,241*l*. with the average produce in 1793, 1794, and 1795, amounting to 737,824*l*., from which results an excess of 93,427*l*. in 1796, which excess, subtracted from 557,793*l*. being the deficiency upon the duty on British spirits, leaves a sum to be added to the produce of these taxes in 1796 amounting to 464,366*l*.

Some allowance, however, upon this computed amount of the loss upon the distilleries, should be made, in consideration of any increase of duties upon beer which may have taken place within the same period, and on that account; but what the amount of that allowance may be your Committee have not the means of ascertaining.

Upon the result of this examination, your Committee find the actual average produce of the permanent taxes for these four years, to be about 13,780,000*l*.

To which, if there be an addition for the deficiency occasioned by the stoppage of the distilleries, as estimated upon the first principle, it will be 13,919,000*l*.; and upon the second 13,896,000*l*.

Your Committee, adverting to the estimate of the probable produce of the permanent taxes made by the select committee of 1791, upon an average of the three preceding years, find it to have been 13,472,000*l*., exclusive of any additional allowance for the taxes imposed in 1789, or for any probable increase in the produce of the duties on tobacco.

From this sum must be deducted the aver-

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age produce of the taxes repealed in 1792, amounting, as appears by papers laid before the House of Commons on the 10th and 15th February, 1792, to about 223,000*l*. leaving a sum of 13,249,000*l*.

Your Committee have also thought it proper to ascertain the average produce of the permanent taxes during the four years which immediately preceded the present war; and they find the same to have been, after allowing for the deduction of the shop-tax, and the duties repealed in 1792, about * 13,831,300*l*.

Your Committee have the satisfaction of observing, that the actual produce of the same taxes, on the average of the four years of war (without making any allowance for the stoppage of the distilleries), exceeds the estimate formed in 1791, by above 530,000*l*., and is below their average produce in the four preceding years of peace only by 50,000*l*.

And making such allowance, on either of the grounds above stated, it would exceed the said estimate of 1791, by about 650,000*l*., and exceed the said average produce by more than 60,000*l*.

§ 2. Your Committee have next proceeded to examine the produce of the several taxes provided for defraying the increased charge of the public debt, from the 6th of January, 1793, to the 5th of January, 1797; distinguishing the produce of each year.

Upon this examination they find, that the duties continued in 1793 produced,

In 1793 £.247,638 0 0

1794 248,858 10 6

1795 202,385 0 0

1796 166,813 0 0

That the duties continued and imposed in 1794 produced,

In 1794 £.618,040 13 4½

1795 822,122 9 0½

1796 818,868 4 7½

That the duties imposed in 1795 produced,

In 1795 £.1,373,000 9 7

1796 1,332,794 19 4½

And they find that the duties imposed in 1796 had produced, on the 5th of January, 1797, 604,644 9 2½

In stating the produce of these several taxes, your Committee think it necessary to

* N. B. Produce in each of the four years:

1789, deducting shop-tax 13,374,000

1790, not deducting arrears of

shop-tax 14,072,000

1791 ditto 14,239,000

1792 ditto 14,412,000

Total £.56,095,000

Deducting 3½ years of produce of taxes repealed in 1792 770,000

Reduced total £.55,325,000

Annual average upon four years of peace £.13,831,000

[P]

observe, that the produce of new duties within the first year of their being imposed, can seldom afford correct means of estimating their real productiveness. In some instances, the first year has been more productive than subsequent years; but, in general, the first year has been less productive; the collection of most duties not taking place before a considerable part of the current year has elapsed, and a considerable part of the produce of the fraction of the current year, not being paid into the exchequer till after the termination of that year, and the modes of collection not being brought at their beginning to their greatest degree of efficacy, an accurate estimate of it cannot be made from the amount of its produce which appears upon the exchequer account.

Your Committee were, however, desirous of examining how far the produce of the taxes imposed in the three first years of the war (of which alone, at present, your committee have been enabled to form any adequate judgment) appears sufficient to defray the charges of such part of the public debt as has been funded during the same period. For this purpose they have looked to the year most distant from their commencement, as affording, for the reasons above given, the best means to judge of their productiveness.

In 1793, they find, that the annual charge upon the public, on account of the interest, management, and 1*l.* per cent upon the debt funded in 1793, was 252,812*l.*

The produce of the duties answerable for this charge was, in the year 1796, only 166,813*l.*

But your Committee think it their duty to observe, that this produce must have been materially affected by the stoppage of the distilleries, which prevailed from June 1795, to November 1796.

If addition were made to the preceding sum, calculated upon the principles adopted upon the same subject under the head of permanent taxes, according to the first of these principles, it would be 81,820*l.*, and the produce of the duties in 1796 would be 248,633*l.*

Or, if made according to the second principle, the addition would be 66,147*l.*, and the total 232,960*l.*

In either case it appears nearly equal to defray the charges created in the year 1793.

In 1794, the annual charge upon the public, on account of the interest, management, and 1*l.* per cent of the debt funded in 1794, appears to be 773,824*l.*

The produce of the duties continued and imposed in that year, appears to have been, in the year 1796, 818,868*l.*

An observation similar to that made upon the year 1793, arises upon the part of these duties which was raised upon spirits, so far as the same was affected by the stoppage of the distilleries.

The addition to be made in this respect, upon the first principle of calculation, would

be 85,668*l.* and would make the whole produce of these duties about 904,536*l.*

The addition to be made upon the second principle would be 38,428*l.*, and would make the total produce about 859,296*l.*

It appears also that the sum of 66,000*l.* was received in 1795 for the increased duty on spirit licences, upon which nothing appears to have been received in 1796.

In every view they appear to leave a considerable surplus, after defraying the charges of the debt created in the year 1794.

In 1795, the annual charge upon the public, on account of the interest, management, and 1*l.* per cent upon the debt funded in 1795, was 1,227,415*l.*

The produce of the duties answerable for this charge was, in the year 1796 1,332,794*l.*

The former observations upon the duties imposed on spirits might here also be applicable; but as no adequate judgment can be formed from the actual receipt in 1795, it being the first year of their commencement, your Committee have no grounds for forming an estimate upon the same principles.

The new duty upon wine produced,

In 1795 736,871 0 0

In 1796 only 432,689 0 0

The difference has probably arisen partly from the duty having been taken in 1795 upon the stock in hand, which swelled the produce of that year, and partly from the decreased importation in 1796.

Estimating, however, the produce of these duties only by the actual receipt in 1796, they appear also to exceed, by a considerable sum, the charges of the debt created in that year.

In 1796, the charge upon the public for the interest, management, and 1*l.* per cent upon the debt created, was 1,851,226*l.*

The actual receipt at the exchequer of the duties imposed in that year, was, on the 5th of January, 1797 604,644*l.*

Your Committee, for many of the reasons above assigned, do not think it possible for them at present to form, upon similar grounds, an estimate of a whole year's produce of the duties imposed in 1796; neither do they think it advisable to delay this their first report, by entering into any detailed examination of the particulars; they feel it, however, their duty to observe, that no adequate judgment can be formed of the future produce of these taxes from the actual receipt at the exchequer at the above-mentioned period.

They have subjoined to this their first report, a statement of the dates at which the several taxes imposed in the year 1796 commenced, and such other documents as have been laid before them upon this subject.

III.—*Unfunded Debt, and Demands Outstanding.*

Your Committee have next proceeded to examine and state the amount of the unfunded debt, and demands outstanding on the 5th of January, 1797; under the heads

of exchequer, treasury, army, barracks, ordnance, and navy, as stated by their respective offices, in the several accounts annexed; reserving to themselves the liberty of stating, in any future report, any farther information or observations thereupon, which a more detailed investigation may enable them to lay before the House. They have distinguished under each head;—1st, What part of the unfunded debt has been provided for;—2nd, What part, although provided for by the grants of former years, had not been paid on the 5th of January, 1797, by reason of the consolidated fund not having produced the surplus at which it was estimated;—and 3dly, What part appears at present to be unprovided for.

§ 1. The unfunded debt of the exchequer consists, 1st, Of bills which may be considered as provided for; viz. bills standing out undischarged for land and malt taxes of the years 1795, 1796, and 1797, amounting in the whole to 5,682,000*l*.

Upon this matter your Committee observe, that although they are obliged to state this sum as part of the exchequer bills standing out undischarged, and as having the appearance of an unfunded debt, yet that it consists principally of an anticipation (in the usual form) of the land and malt taxes already voted by parliament, which will be re-paid by the produce of those taxes in the regular course of their collection; the only part of it which can with any propriety be called an unfunded debt, arises from the deficiencies of land and malt; these deficiencies are constituted by the interest due upon the bills, and by the difference between the amount of the sums advanced by the Bank upon these taxes, at a computed amount of 2,750,000*l*. per annum, and the actual receipt upon these taxes in each year at the exchequer, after the usual deductions for collection, payments to militia, &c.; and they have uniformly made a part of the annual charge, under the head of supply.

2d. The second description of unfunded debt of the exchequer, is composed of certain sums provided for out of funds which, upon the 5th of January 1797, were insufficient for this purpose, viz.

Exchequer bills then standing out undischarged upon the land tax of 1794	141,000
Malt tax of 1794	196,000
	£.337,000

which sum was the total deficiency of the land and malt taxes of the year 1794, at the time of settling the account of that year with the Bank.

Of the same sort is the amount of exchequer bills issued under an act of parliament for raising a certain sum of money towards the supply, anno 1795, 368,000*l*.

And also the amount of bills issued under

an act for granting 2,895,000*l*. out of the consolidated fund, anno 1795 *1,540,000*l*.

And also the amount of bills issued under an act for granting 3,500,000*l*. out of the consolidated fund, anno 1796, 1,323,000*l*.

3dly. Two articles of the unfunded debt of the exchequer appear at present to be unprovided for, viz.

The amount of exchequer bills issued under an act for the relief of the merchants trading to, and planters in the islands of Grenada and St. Vincent, 73,000*l*.

And under the act for raising 2,500,000*l*. by a vote of credit, anno 1796, 1,110,600*l*.

It appears therefore that the exchequer unfunded debt provided for, is	5,682,000
The part which was, on the 5th of January, 1797, insufficiently provided for	3,182,600
And the remainder which is unprovided for	1,183,600
Total	£.10,048,200

§ 2. The outstanding demands upon the Treasury consisted on the 5th of January, 1797;

Of articles voted in 1796, and provided for out of funds which, upon the 5th of January 1797, were insufficient for this purpose	102,012	6	1½
And of other articles, appearing at present to be unprovided for, amounting to....	370,144	16	2½
Total	£.472,157	2	4½

§ 3. The treasury bills paid at the Bank previous to the 5th of Jan. 1797... 1,186,415
Those accepted before, but paid since, viz. 547,000
And the warrants for army service due and unpaid on 5th January, 1797, appear to be severally unprovided for, and amount to 355,054

Total £.2,088,469

§ 4. The extraordinary expenses of the army incurred, and paid by the paymaster general from the 25th December, 1795 to the 24th December, 1796, both inclusive, appear to be unprovided for, and amount to 3,387,476*l*. 6*s*. 6*d*.

These extraordinaries have heretofore been usually stated as part of the supply for the year subsequent to that in which they were incurred and paid.

But it is necessary to observe, that this sum, when voted, will afford the means of paying the sum of 1,583, 243*l*., which appears

* N. B. In this sum is included the sum of 1,023,000*l*. stated by the chancellor of the exchequer (for re-payments to the Bank) as part of the supply for the year 1797.

to have been an outstanding demand for army services on the 5th of January, 1797.

In like manner the sum of 150,780*l.* being a demand outstanding in part of the sum of 290,000*l.* voted by parliament for the erection of permanent barracks, would be repaid out of these army extraordinaries when voted.

§ 5. In the barrack department there is an outstanding demand unprovided for, of 288,048*l.*

§ 6. In the ordnance there appears to be an outstanding demand, of which 136,780*l.* 4*s.* 3*d.* is stated to have been unprovided for, the remainder having been already granted in this session of parliament; but in the present view of this subject, the whole may be considered as unprovided for 717,741*l.* 0*s.* 1*d.*

§ 7. The unfunded debt of the navy unprovided for, is 4,610,246*l.* 14*s.* 4*d.*

But your Committee observe, that from the delay in calling for payment of many of the charges of which this debt is composed, a floating arrear, to a very considerable extent may generally be expected to subsist, according to the nature and extent of this service.

§ 8. Two farther demands are also to be stated here as unprovided for, viz.

Hanoverian troops	83,603	12	7
Brunswick ditto	7,570	11	6½

£.91,174 4 1½

§ 9. Totals of the unfunded debt.

1st. Charged on funds which were insufficient on the 5th of January,

1797 3,284,012 6 1½

2d. Unprovided for 12,736,900 0 3½

£.16,020,912 6 5½

3d. Provided for, being the anticipation, in the usual form, upon the land and malt taxes 5,682,000*l.*

§ 10. Your Committee have thought proper to compare the unfunded debt and demands outstanding on the 5th January, 1797, and the unfunded debt and demands outstanding on the 5th of January, 1793, with a view to ascertain the increase of this description of debt during the war, and they find that the unfunded debt and demands outstanding on the 5th of January, 1793, consisted of the following articles:

1. Exchequer bills	5,500,000	0	0
2. Treasury account	685,936	1	5
3. Army services unsatisfied	641,176	0	0
4. Ordnance ditto	81,025	5	8
5. Navy Debt	3,344,397	3	5

£.10,252,534 10 6

For the anticipation, in the usual form, upon the land and malt taxes 2,765,000*l.*

And also exchequer bills, by an act for raising a certain sum of money towards defraying the public expenses occasioned by the

augmentation of his majesty's forces, which were provided for by the taxes upon the Spanish armament, 1,213,000*l.*

§ 11. Your Committee think proper to observe in this place, that (besides what may be due to the public upon monies impressed, and balances from public accountants) the following sums have been advanced by way of loan, and now remain due to the public:

Advance by way of loan to the emperor 1,420,000*l.*

Ditto for relief of islands of Grenada and St. Vincent 910,000*l.*

Advance paid on bills drawn by the treasurers of the said islands, for the purchase of provisions, &c. 140,000*l.*

Remitted in specie to Ireland 52,500*l.*

And a farther sum of 600,000*l.* is proposed to be advanced to the planters of Grenada and St. Vincent, included in the statement of the supply for the present year 600,000*l.*

IV.—ESTIMATES.

Your Committee have next proceeded to examine and state the expected total amount of the public expenses for the year ending the 5th January, 1798, as far as the same can now be ascertained or estimated by the several offices, and they find the estimates are as follow, viz.

1. Navy 12,935,496 0 0

In this estimate no future charge is included for neutral cargoes, as the value has not yet been ascertained by the assessors appointed by the admiralty court.

2d Army,

Ordinary ex-	£.	s.	£.	s. d.
penses	6,897,958	5	11,034,958	5 0
Extraordina-				
ries for 1797	4,137,000	0		

The extraordinaries of the army for the current year appear now to be brought forward, for the first time by way of estimate, having always constituted a part of the charge of the succeeding year.

3d. Barracks 449,076 0 0

4th Ordnance 1,321,024 9 2

5th Miscellaneous services 1,149,843 17 6

In this sum are included 600,000*l.* proposed to be lent to persons connected with, and trading to, the islands of Grenada and St. Vincent, and also a farther sum of 464,920*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* for articles which it has been usual to pay, in the first instance, out of the civil list, and to propose afterwards to parliament to vote a sum sufficient to

re-pay what has been so advanced.

6th. A sum, upon account, for making temporary advances by way of loan, for the service of the emperor 500,000, 0 0

The following articles were stated by the chancellor of the exchequer as part of the supply for the year, 1797, viz.

7th. Deficiency of land and malt..... 350,000 0 0

8th. Commissioners for national debt 220,000 0 0

Add to these a vote of credit, which your committee are informed is intended to be proposed to parliament 2,500,000 0 0

£.30,440,398 11 8

The re-payments to the Bank of 1,023,000*l.* stated by the chancellor of the exchequer as part of the supply for 1797, are omitted here, as having been included in the sum of 1,154,000*l.* stated to be a part of the unfunded debt of the Exchequer, not sufficiently provided for on the 5th of January, 1797.

V.—WAYS AND MEANS.

Your Committee find that the Ways and Means already proposed for the year 1797, consist of

Articles voted, viz.

Land and malt £. 2,750,000

Loan 18,000,000

Surplus of grants 420,000

£. 21,170,000

And of articles estimated, viz.

Growing produce of the consolidated fund.....£.1,075,000

Exchequer bills 5,500,000

Lottery 200,000

Total £. 27,945,000

VI.—REDUCTION OF PUBLIC DEBT.

Your Committee have farther proceeded to state an account of the progress that has been made in the reduction of the public debt since the 5th of July 1786, of the sums now annually applicable thereto, and of the farther progress which may be expected to be made, as far as the same can be at present ascertained, in the reduction of the debt now existing.

§ 1. Your Committee have great satisfaction upon this subject, in contemplating the large means which are now annually employed for the reduction of the public debt, and the considerable progress which has been already made towards that important end.

The annual sum now applicable to that purpose appears to amount to 3,359,799*l.* 6*s.* 2*d.*

Consisting of the following heads :

Charged upon the consolidated fund in 1786	£.1,000,000
Annual grant	200,000
Interest of capital bought	700,026
Annuities expired or fallen in....	118,361
Amount of the 1 <i>l.</i> per cent. created during the war.....	1,341,411
	£.3,359,798

The capital stock purchased by the application of the several sums appears to have been on the 16th of March 1797, 23,334,200*l.*

§ 2. The farther progress to be made in the reduction of the debt has been calculated, by order of the commissioners, according to the operation of the annual million, the interest of the stock redeemed by it, the amount of expired and unclaimed annuities, and an annual sum of two hundred thousand pounds in aid of this fund, granted by parliament, as applied to the reduction of the debt which existed before the war, and considered as then amounting to the sum of two hundred and forty millions. These calculations, of course, depend upon the different prices at which the several stocks in which the public debt consists may happen to be purchased. The earliest date, according to these calculations, at which the whole of the debt that existed prior to 1793, and taken at two hundred and forty millions, would be cancelled, is 33 years from the 1st of February 1797; and even the most remote date at which it would be cancelled does not exceed 54 years. Your Committee have subjoined to this part of their report copies of these several calculations.

§. Your Committee observe, that the said calculations relate only to the progress which will be made, upon different data, in the reduction of the debt existing before the war, by the application of the funds provided for that purpose.

The reduction of the debt which has been incurred during the war, depends upon different considerations. The amount of the sinking fund applicable thereto, including the 1*l.* per cent. on account of the loan and bills funded in the present session amounts to£.1,341,411

The dividend on the stock purchased thereby is 77,068

The total amount of the new sinking fund was..... £.1,418,479

The capital of the new debt to the reduction of which this sum is applicable, is 130,665,896*l.*

In order to give the House fuller information upon this part of the subject, your Committee have called for farther calculations; but in the mean time they think it necessary to observe, that the new sinking fund appears

to bear a much larger proportion to the new debt, than the old sinking fund with its accumulations, the annual grant of two hundred thousand pounds, and the annuities expired, does at the present moment to the old debt; and that the whole sinking fund, after reaching the sum of four millions, is no longer made applicable by law to the discharge at compound interest of what may then remain of the old debt; but the operation of the new sinking fund is to continue at compound interest till the new debt shall be totally extinguished
March 31st 1797.

Debate on Mr. Sheridan's Motion respecting Loans to the Emperor.] April 4. Mr. Sheridan rose, in pursuance of notice, to call the attention of the House to the subject of making any farther advances to the Emperor, and proceeded to the following effect:—I believe there never was a subject brought before parliament which excited more anxiety in the public mind, than the present, or one to which the nation looked with more impatience, than they do for the decision of this House with respect to a future loan to the Emperor. It is a point which, in my opinion, involves the question, whether they are to be saved or ruined? And it is to his imperial majesty himself, highly important to know, before he commences the most important campaign that was, perhaps, ever opened in Europe, what is the determination of this House upon the subject of sending money out of the country at this awful moment. In discussing this momentous question, I am ready to admit, that whatever I may think of the necessity or the prudence of advances that have been already made by us to foreign powers, we should at all events keep good faith; and therefore it is highly important, that we consider duly before we encourage in the Emperor a hope that he is to have any aid from us in the future prosecution of this war. With this view of the subject I moved for certain papers, which I took to be essential to the subject in discussion. To that motion there ought to have been made a return very different from that small scratch which is exhibited on the paper now before us. What I lament is not before us, in the whole of the correspondence between the chancellor of the exchequer and the bank directors since the year 1794 upon the subject of sending money to the Emperor. If the right hon. gentleman wishes to come to a free discussion of the question,—Whether it be essential to the true inter-

ests of this country that farther advances should be made to the Emperor, under all the circumstances by which we are surrounded, whatever may have been the opinions of the bank directors, I shall be ready to argue the subject with him in that way. I think the subject may be now discussed without their opinions, as far as the motion with which I shall conclude, will call for that discussion. Some may say it is premature to inquire into the question of advancing more money to the Emperor before we have had a complete investigation of the causes which led to the order in council, by which the bank were directed to stop payment. That appears to me to be very unwise counsel; for by it you may be led to defer the remedy until it is too late. It may be said, that you should not apply your remedy until you know the cause of the order: that, I own, is figuratively very correct; but if you attempt to carry it into practice, it may be fatal to the patient. If a physician were to order that neither a bandage nor a styptic should be applied to a bleeding wound until he had discovered the cause of the complaint, his patient would stand in danger of dying, before the remedy could be applied; or, if the Humane Society were to order that no person should be attempted to be brought to active life from a state of suspended animation, until the coroner's inquest had set upon the body, and brought in their verdict, I apprehend their efforts would not be very useful.—I shall now proceed to the more immediate points of the subject.

A worthy baronet (sir W. Pulteney) has given his opinion upon part of this subject already. I have already said, that I differed from that opinion. I hope that public credit will revive, and that in the person of the Bank of England. I am also confident, whether you endeavour to establish a bank upon the faith of the landed property of this country, or whether you try any other means, that no such attempts should be made until you are entirely satisfied that public credit cannot be restored in the person of the bank of England. From what I have heard abroad, and from the papers which have been laid upon the table this day, I am glad to see that the bank appears to have made such a stand against the measures which have led to this effect. I have, from the commencement, declared openly and freely

what I thought of the conduct of the bank. Upon the face of things, they certainly do appear to have been guilty of errors and some degree of criminality. It is, therefore, with much satisfaction, I perceive from the papers on our table, that they are less to blame than I at first surmised. This will afford matter for joy to the country at large; because, in addition to their being a corporate body, for purposes more immediately relating to themselves, the bank are the channel through which the public creditor is paid. It would, therefore, Sir, unless it could be proved that they had done something to forfeit their charter, be rash and improper to make them no longer the medium through which the public creditor is to be paid. With respect to the bank in the present instance, it does appear, that from the end of the year 1794, they have been unceasing in their representations to the minister, whose obstinate perseverance has brought the country to its present calamitous situation. If, Sir, it shall by these papers appear, that the Bank frequently remonstrated against the measure of making the treasury bills payable at the Bank; if it shall appear that they had nine distinct promises from him to abstain from that practice; if it shall appear that the right hon. gentleman promised to bring down the advances of the Bank from 2,500,000*l.* to 500,000*l.* as requested by the Bank; if it shall appear that he almost gave a pledge to bind himself, by a parliamentary measure, to make this reduction; if it shall be seen that he never kept any one of these promises: if it shall appear that, notwithstanding these violations of the most solemn engagements, the Bank, with a too-blameable facility, continued to afford supplies to him upon representations which amounted to intimidation—I say, Sir, if these things shall appear, if the House shall find that the bank continued their remonstrances until the very eve of issuing the order of council, which they did not solicit, and which they did not want for their own affairs, I shall think, however, the directors may be culpable, from their too great facility, yet, that they stand clear of much of the blame, which, in the first instance, we might be inclined to attach to them. From the papers on the table, it appears, that on the 3d of December, 1795, the directors came to the following resolution, which was communicated to the mi-

nister: “Resolved, That the following resolution of the court be communicated to the chancellor of the exchequer: That the court of directors, after a very solemn deliberation, adequate to the importance of the subject, are unanimously of opinion, that should such a loan (*viz.* a loan of 3,000,000*l.* to the Emperor) take place, they are but too well grounded in declaring (from the actual effects of the Emperor’s last loan, and the continued drains of specie and bullion they still experience) that they have the most cogent reasons to apprehend very momentous and alarming consequences. They are, therefore, led to hope (after expressing their acknowledgments to the chancellor of the exchequer, for having hinted that the welfare and safety of the bank should in this matter supersede every other consideration) that he will be pleased to lay aside the adoption of such a measure, which they beg leave to repeat, would be, in their opinion, most fatal in its consequences.” On the 14th of January, 1796, they came to the following opinion, which was likewise communicated to the minister: It is the opinion of the committee of treasury, that the governor and deputy-governor should represent to the chancellor of the exchequer, That they cannot look upon the scheme of assisting the Emperor to raise a loan in Germany, by the guarantee of the parliament of Great Britain in any light which will not, one way or other, be detrimental to this country, even if a law were passed by parliament to prevent British subjects from taking any share therein. That such a call for money in Germany will occasion demands of it from hence. Germans, Italian, and other foreign capitalists, who have property here, will be induced to draw it away. People in Holland, who by the late acts have money locked up here, may go to Germany, and draw for it from thence. That funds which would otherwise be employed in speculations of trade with England, may, by such an opportunity of investment at home, be diverted from the one to the other purpose. That the exchange between this country and Hamburgh may be much affected by it. That, in spite of legal prohibitions, it is to be apprehended that some people here would take shares in such a negotiation under the names of their foreign correspondents. From these and other causes they are fully of opinion, that the governor and deputy governor can give no advice to Mr. Pitt in favour of such a measure; which

is indeed, of a wide political extent, and beyond the line of their duty to judge of? On the 11th of February, 1796, there was formed the following resolutions:—"That it is the opinion of this court, founded upon its experience of the effects of the late imperial loan, that if any farther loan or advance of money to the Emperor, or to any other foreign state, should in the present state of affairs, take place, it will, in all probability, prove fatal to the Bank of England. The court of directors do therefore most earnestly deprecate the adoption of any such measure; and they solemnly protest against any responsibility for the calamitous consequences that may follow thereupon. That the governor and deputy-governor do communicate these resolutions to the chancellor of his majesty's exchequer." The House shall now hear the answers of the minister to these opinions and remonstrances:—Answer to the first. "The chancellor of the exchequer having perused the resolution with great attention, repeatedly said, that certainly, as matters were there stated, he should not think at present of bringing forward such a measure; adding, that though he should, in opening the budget, make it known that he made reserve with the present contractors for the loan, to permit the Emperor's raising three millions, should circumstances require it, he should lay aside all thoughts of it, unless the situation of things, relative to the Bank, should so alter as to render such loan of no importance or inconvenience to them in perspective. The governor promised him, that should such a change take place, and he should wish for the adoption of such a measure, he certainly would communicate it to him with pleasure. Mr. Pitt wished very much to have the paper left with him for the purpose of communicating its contents to the cabinet, if he found it necessary: promising, that no one should have a sight of it elsewhere and that if the governor would call upon him in two or three days, he would return it to him." Answer to the second. "Mr. Pitt replied, that after the repeated intimations which he had given to the governor and deputy governor of the Bank, that no farther loan to the Emperor would be resolved on without previous communication with the Bank, and due consideration of the state of their circumstances, he did not see any reason for these resolutions; that he did suppose they were adopted in a moment of alarm,

and that he should consider them in that light."

After this solemn promise, and after expressing his idea that the last resolution was adopted in the moment of alarm, he agreed to send a million and a half to the Emperor with a determination that parliament should not know it. If I am not misinformed, all the advances that were made to ministers were accompanied with very strong remonstrances against the mischievous tendency which they had on the credit of the Bank, and which remonstrances were answered by repeated assurances that the sums should be punctually repaid. If what I heard upon the subject be true, the chancellor of the exchequer ought not only to dread the anger of the public for his conduct in this business, but he ought to be ashamed even to face the cabinet itself. On the 6th of October commenced the present session of parliament. His majesty was made to say on that day, amongst other things, "I rely on your zeal and public spirit for such supplies as you may think necessary for the service of the year. It is a great satisfaction to me to observe, that, notwithstanding the temporary embarrassments which have been experienced, the state of the commerce, manufactures, and revenue of the country, proves the real extent and solidity of our resources, and furnishes you such means as must be equal to any exertions which the present crisis may require." I say, that when these words were uttered, the chancellor of the exchequer knew, from the representations of the Bank, that it would be unable to continue its advances, without being in danger of that which has since actually happened: this he knew when he deliberately put into the mouth of the sovereign, that which he, as minister, knew to be a falsehood. The Bank, I own, were blameable in complying with the minister's demands, but he was criminal in making such demands. These loans avowed, and the loan concealed, brought the Bank to its present condition, in which we see it unable to pay the public creditor.

I now come to the order in council. The whole of that proceeding is founded upon the representation of the chancellor of the exchequer. None of the proceedings which led to that order are in writing, I believe. They keep no journal; I wish they did, and I wish that this minutes of that business were before the House. I should like the House to see, whether the

representations made by the chancellor of the exchequer had any resemblance to truth. To see, whether he laid before the council the various remonstrances that were made to him by the directors of the Bank. Whether he informed the council of one word of the real state of the Bank. All that appears upon that subject is, that the order in council was made upon the mere assertion of the chancellor of the exchequer. Was the order in council a representation of the truth? Was the pressure actually produced by the unusual demands for specie that were made upon the metropolis; or was it not the gradual result of that which was repeatedly stated by the Bank to the chancellor of the exchequer? I say it was from the latter. The chancellor of the exchequer knew it; and it is an aggravation of his guilt that he abused the unsuspecting temper of his majesty, who was present at this council, by misrepresenting the fact.

I have stated all the communications we know of between the Bank and the minister. We have the authority of the former, that the advances to the Emperor were the main cause of the difficulties in which we are now involved. This I should think pretty good authority. But when we see all their predictions verified by the event, I must respect their opinion more. But, taking it for granted that we shall have a cross-examination upon the subject, I shall proceed to state what my opinion is, of another loan to the Emperor, in the present state of the country. I wish to take the question fairly, and to put out of my mind the prudential reasons of the case, and the probability of repayment; though, on the face of it, we are not, as guardians of the public purse, justified in lending money without a probability of its being repaid. I fairly admit, that if another loan be necessary for our co-operation, and if it be connected with the vital interests of the state, the prospect of repayment is a subordinate consideration. His imperial majesty was bound to pay the first loans by instalments, to discharge the interest punctually, and to send a commissioner to this country, as his agent. He failed in all these engagements; he paid no instalments, was not punctual in paying the interest, and sent no commissioner. That he paid the interest by more loans I grant; but the commissioner was wholly omitted. As to any future prospect of repayment, we have this pretty satisfaction, that, by the

last paper laid upon the table, the Emperor engages to repay the 500,000*l.* that has been advanced to him out of any farther loan that may be furnished. There are no means so good as this: Mexico and Peru are not so excellent a source. They may by some accident fail; but if one debt is to be repaid, only when a man lends you more money, there is no security half so solid and so strong. We have, by the treaty respecting the first loan, a security upon the Emperor's hereditary dominions, we have a claim upon Brabant; the Netherlands are mortgaged to us; we are, I may safely say, not mortgagees in possession; and as the French do not seem inclined to cede them to us, I do not lay much stress upon that security. But, as an argument in favour of another loan, it is said, that the Emperor's resources will be amply sufficient after the war. If that is the case, it is a strong reason against imposing such additional burthens upon this country, in its present exhausted state; but if it should not be the case, will it not render the prospect of repayment more distant? But I will not dwell upon this part of the subject, because, if farther advances are connected with the vital interests of the state, it will be immaterial to my argument, whether they are furnished by way of gift or of loan.

In considering the subject in the next point of view, I shall not state it as a method of forcing peace. I by no means take it even as an indirect mode tending to lead to peace; but as the worst means of continuing the war. Under this impression, I contend, that whatever gentlemen may think of the war, they ought to support my proposition; because the question is not, whether another loan will or will not be an accommodation to the Emperor, but whether it will do him greater benefit, or us greater injury? This is the fair way of considering it; and in that point of view it must be proved that the Emperor cannot take the field without another loan. Are we to suppose that, notwithstanding the former sums that have been sent to him, he cannot make any vigorous efforts without this new one? Will gentlemen argue that he can make no military exertions unless his troops are well paid? I will not remind those gentlemen of their declaration so often made, that the French must fly before troops well disciplined and regularly paid. We have fatal experience of the folly of those declarations; we have seen

soldiers frequently without pay, and without sufficient provisions, put to rout the best-paid armies in Europe. If I am to be told that they are influenced by a principle "which they of the adverse party want;" that they possess an enthusiastic attachment to the cause which they support; that they are actuated by a spirit of indignation at the oppression attempted to be exerted against them; that it is this that has nerved their arms and steeled their hearts; if I am to be told that the Emperor, even for his last stake, cannot rouse his subjects to such efforts; why, then, I say, the cause is desperate indeed, and you will be throwing away your money, without being able to do any effectual service to your ally. And do I demand from the subjects of Austria greater sacrifices than have been made by the people of Great Britain? By these sacrifices have we been reduced to our present situation. Having, therefore, been so reduced, we must see the absolute necessity of restoring public credit by all the means in our power. We must never lose sight of this—that it is the credit of Great Britain that has been the terror of her enemies: it is her life-blood and marrow; and whenever it is gone, she will be reduced, not, perhaps, to a lifeless body, but to a small and insignificant trunk in the eyes of all Europe. I say, Sir, therefore, we must look to our actual situation. We have doubled our national debt. If this campaign be the last, twenty-six millions will not pay our permanent peace establishment; but we must, in addition to the burthens under which the people labour, lay on five millions of additional taxes. How these additional taxes can be raised without the restoration of public credit, I leave others to determine. Under these circumstances I would say to our ally, You must not ask me to do that which can only afford you temporary aid, but which will bring on me entire destruction. If we cast our eyes around, we shall find no pleasing prospects to dwell on. Even India, from which we were fondly taught to expect assistance, is labouring under a pressure of a similar nature with this country. In the West Indies, if we are to keep the conquests, which with a savage barbarity we persist in making in St. Domingo, only to purchase graves for our gallant countrymen, we must look, not only to our present expenses, but to our permanent peace establishment. At home,

we are told, money is the only commodity in which the army will be paid; that the internal peace of the country depends upon it. We are told, by insinuation, that the burthens of the people are so great, that the repose of every member in that House rests upon the army being paid in specie. Look to the state of Ireland: if a civil war in that country can be avoided, must there not be a supply of money for the maintenance of public credit there? Upon the state of the funds in this country, I look back a year from the day on which I am now speaking. I find that the five per cents were then at 101, and the three per cents 69½. What are they on this day? The five per cents are at 72½, and the three per cents, at 49½. And this in one year! What may be their fall in another year is a calculation that must appal the stoutest mind to contemplate. Can any thing be done to restore the funds but by restoring public credit? It may be said, that it is wrong to lay before the public so dark a statement. I say, Sir, no evil is so great as concealment. I do not wish to encourage despair, but I wish to avoid deceit. I must oppose the system of delusion that has so long been practised upon the country. Do we want an example? Let us look to the Bank. The Bank were trustees for others; they forgot their situation; they trusted to the promises of the right hon. gentleman, and they made large advances to him. We see how it has fared with them, and so will it fare with this House, if we go on confiding as we have done. Whether the minister was deceived himself, or whether he deceived the Bank, will be a subject of future inquiry; but enough has already been laid before us, to enable us to come to this conclusion—that we must withhold all farther confidence from him. An attempt to bring the House to vote that no farther advances shall be made to the Emperor may be said to lead to the worst effect, that of retarding peace. As a measure of war, we have a right to say to the Emperor that we have done all we can. We have not given our last guinea only, but our honour. We have a right to desire him to call upon his own subjects. But it may be said, Will not the motion induce France to offer terms which she would not have offered, if we had furnished the Emperor with the assistance required? I think it would produce an effect directly contrary. I am persuaded

that if one thing could give more delight to France than another, it would be the knowledge that the Commons of England had resolved to persevere in the present ruinous system. The French would not then care whether the Emperor's troops carried on offensive or defensive war; they would not then value the loss of this or that portion of territory; they would console themselves with the reflection, that this proceeding of the Commons was, perhaps, slowly, but surely sapping and undermining the pillars of the public credit of Great Britain; and they would see the certainty of making a conquest of us. In the event, therefore, of any negotiation, the effect that would be produced would be directly contrary to that which has been predicted.

With regard to the general safety of this country, admitting our credit to be restored, I should despair as little as any man; but I fear that some among us think, that our apprehension about public credit is ill founded, and that if we get into the system of the French, and rely upon paper, we shall be an over-match for them. If there is to be no regard to public credit, and national faith; if there is to be no dread of a national bankruptcy; if "perish commerce, perish credit," be the determination of gentlemen, I will not pretend to prophecy the result; but the feelings of the nation are, I believe, against such a scheme. Should we even fall in the endeavour to keep up the national honour, by endeavouring to preserve the public faith, we shall fall with dignity, and shall expire with something like an enviable glory. As long as we are just to the people, so long shall we retain their affections; and I am confident that if the trial were really to be made, whether this country should be a province of France, there would be but one heart, and, in the language of the poet, we shall exclaim:

"England, with all thy faults, I love thee still."

The statement which I have laid before the House, may be said to be more gloomy than circumstances warrant. I shall be glad to have it proved so; but at present I am inclined to think that I have erred on the contrary side. We have heard, that "the people have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them;" and it has been said, "that the parliament belongs to the king, and not to the people." I hope we shall not hear, in

the present case, that the king's honour is engaged for another loan to the Emperor, and that we, being the king's parliament, must fulfil his engagements. Sir, I care not for the authority by which such doctrines are maintained: they are the doctrines of pride, ignorance, and presumption, and the more solemn the place where they are uttered, and the more sacred the function of the man from whom they proceed, the more libellous and treasonable are they in their nature. Sir, you know that we are bound to give advice to the king. You know that if any member dared to introduce the king's name to influence any debate, you would immediately call him to order. We need not be told, that there is a suspicion abroad, of our looking too much to the crown, and too little to the people. We are not ignorant that all who have places under the crown, become so immediately suspected, that they must go again to the people to know, whether they have or have not, by the acceptance of such places, forfeited their confidence. I do hope we shall on this day show that we belong to, and are responsible to, the people; for if we persevere in the course that we have pursued, we shall not deserve to be called the king's parliament, but the parliament of the Emperor; not the parliament of the king of Great Britain, but of the house of Austria. I am prepared to vote, that not a guinea more be furnished to his imperial majesty, and that we extend no farther aid to him; but I am ready to defer to the judgment of others. Some have said that there is information depending which will enable us to take a wider view of the subject. I have, therefore, so far accommodated my motion as not to move any precise resolution, but to make a proposition which, I hope, will meet with almost unanimous concurrence. I move, Sir, "That this House will resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to inquire whether it is consistent with a due regard to the essential interests of this country, that, under the present circumstances, any farther Loans or Advances should be made to his Imperial Majesty."

Mr. Pitt rose and said:—The speech of the hon. gentleman, varied so much from his motion, and there was so little resemblance with the opinions he advanced and the proposition with which he concluded, that I find it extremely difficult to adopt a train of argument which will bear upon both at one time. The argument

of the hon. gentleman, which he pretended to found upon a long detail of circumstances, in his opinion undeniable in point of fact, and certainly, if they are true, very serious in their nature, pointed to a conclusion, in which he premised that the House would betray their trust to their constituents, if they did not join, and from which, if they ventured to dissent he apprehended the most fatal consequences would ensue to the country. He stated the subject now under discussion, as one not to be hung up or suspended, not as one upon which information ought to be collected, and mature deliberation exercised before a decision was passed; but he described it with all that richness of imagery and aptness of allusion of which he is so much master; with even multiplied illustrations, as one on which a moment's delay ought not to be permitted and on which to hesitate was to sacrifice the best interests of the nation. It was a case, according to him, in which patience led to death. I must observe, in setting out, however, that his analogies, however various and beautiful, were not very appropriate. He represented the absurdity of inquiring into the nature of the instrument by which a wound was inflicted, before bandages and styptics were applied, and the insanity of waiting for the coroner's inquest upon a person drowned, before the means recommended by the Humane Society were used for his recovery. He forgot, however, that his motion, as calculated to operate upon the political malady of the state, did not correspond with the steps which ought to be taken in the first instance with a person wounded or drowned. In order to make the allusion accurate, his argument should have stated, that the continuance of remittances to the emperor would produce an inability in the bank to make good their money payments; or supposing that inability to have just arisen, he should have shown, that the measure recommended in his motion was the best which could be adopted to remove that inability. It so happens, however, unfortunately for the accuracy of his allusion, that money payments have been suspended at the bank for a considerable time; that an order of council was issued as the best remedy at the moment for the difficulties of the bank; that this suspension has been recognized by the House of Commons; and that the legislature, anxious to devise the best mode of restoring the credit of that cor-

poration by reinstating it in its former situation of solvency, has thought proper, as a fit preliminary to that deliberation, to appoint a secret committee to inquire into the causes of its embarrassments. This is the true state of the question.

The hon. gentleman represented his motion as essential to the very being of the bank and of the country, and as one from which the House cannot withhold its assent without sealing their own reproach and infamy, by sacrificing every trust which has been delegated to them by the nation; and when the motion was read, it turned out to be nothing more than an ambiguous attempt to make them pronounce indirectly an opinion upon a subject, upon which they were not yet in possession of information sufficient to enable them to pass a fair and just decision. For though the case was of such a nature, as represented in his speech, that it could admit neither doubt nor delay, his motion went to nothing more than the appointment of a committee to inquire into the circumstances connected with it. Does the hon. gentleman mean that the House should now resolve itself into that committee, and report to-night? If this is his intention, where would be the candour of the proceeding in respect of those who wish for farther information, and who are unwilling to deliver an opinion till that information is collected? If he does not mean that the House should now resolve itself into this committee, then I object to the motion as ambiguous, disingenuous, and uncandid, as capable from its nature of being understood two ways, and as tending to mislead the House upon the subject on which they are called upon to decide. The hon. gentleman knows, and the House must be aware, that every question which respects the disposal of the public money must be agitated in a committee of the whole House, so that whether the House may think it proper to give their sanction to the hon. gentleman's argument or not, it must be in a committee of that description which the subject will eventually come before, and in which their decision will be finally given. There is this difference, however, that at present they are not in possession of that degree of information which is necessary for them to decide upon a question of so much importance; whereas they will then have the materials before them, from which such information is to be collected. If the hon. gentleman contends that the

information of which they are at present in possession, is sufficient to enable them to form a correct judgment of what ought, or of what ought not to be done, why does he not move them to come to an immediate decision without going into a committee at all? In short, it was as superfluous in one view, as it is inconsistent and contradictory in another. I should not think that the House will consider it to be their duty to sanction the opinions of the hon. gentleman, upon a view of their general policy and expediency, far less that they will decide upon a subject of so much importance, with the scanty means of information now in their power; but if they mean to comply with the real object of the motion and the true wishes of the mover, let them do it in a fair and manly way, and not by assenting to a motion as ambiguous in its nature as perfidious in its designs. This much I thought it right to say upon the narrow shape of the motion; and having said so much upon the question immediately before the House, it is the less necessary for me to dwell long upon the train of argument which prefaced the proposition on which it turns.

Though I differ very considerably from the hon. gentleman on many of the topics on which he touched, I entirely agree with him on the general importance of the subject. I agree with him in thinking that it is connected not only with the fate of a great and powerful empire, but with the general fate and destiny of the world; but in proportion to its magnitude, ought to be the caution of this House in deciding upon it on narrow and confined principles. That these are domestic considerations which are highly momentous, I readily admit, but I would remind the House that there may be a narrow mode of looking at them. Without attending to the circumstance of our having a great and powerful enemy to contend with, flushed with success, and ambitious of conquest, with means of bringing into the field more numerous armies than perhaps ever were known, and without attending to the circumstance of our insular situation, which in time of war renders a continental diversion of great consequence to our external security; but considering it merely as a question to be decided upon the principles of economy, and calculating the effect, which granting pecuniary remittances to his imperial majesty at the present moment, has a tendency to produce

upon public credit, upon the success of the war and in accelerating the period and improving the terms of peace, I have no hesitation in pronouncing an opinion, that the result of this calculation will be, that this country, by sending pecuniary assistance to her magnanimous and faithful ally, will adopt the best mode of consulting real economy, of restoring public credit, of prosecuting the war, while war is necessary, with advantage, and of securing a speedy and honourable issue to the contest. Were the House therefore to be driven to a decision upon the subject, I should state this as my clear opinion; but by deferring that decision till they have the means of information more fully before them, the influence of my opinion, I firmly believe, will be superseded by their own conviction, and on that account I am happy that the hon. gentleman does not mean to press it to an ultimate decision to-night. The more the subject is discussed, the fewer doubts will be left upon the minds of gentlemen of the propriety of the measure, and the more the circumstances of the case are investigated and analyzed, the more will the opinion of its policy and utility be confirmed. As an opportunity for this discussion will hereafter occur, I do not think it necessary now to enter much at length upon the different topics connected with it. I shall, therefore, only say a few words on each of them.

In the first place, let us try its merits as a measure of economy. And here I must remind the House that the hon. gentleman, by his own confession, does not bring forward the proposition as an indirect mode of forcing government to conclude a peace by disarming the country. The question therefore is, whether, as a mode of carrying on the war, the advantage which is likely to arise to this country from the co-operation of the Emperor, secured by her pecuniary aid, is an equivalent for the temporary inconvenience which the public may sustain in consequence of sending these remittances? To estimate the advantages with the inconveniences is very difficult. But, in the outset, I must set right an assumption of the hon. gentleman respecting the difference of this country granting or withholding pecuniary assistance from her ally. The difference (which of itself is no small one) is not merely whether we are to carry on an offensive or defensive war: this is one consideration, but it is not the only one.

The hon. gentleman may talk in as high terms as he will of French enthusiasm and French gallantry, but he cannot deny, at least he cannot in justice deny, an equal tribute of applause to Austrian valour and Austrian heroism. If we review the campaigns of the war, it is impossible to find in history instances of greater prowess in the soldier, of more accomplished talents in the general, or of more true magnanimity in the sovereign, than what they have exhibited. But the resources of his imperial majesty are in such a situation, that, with all his zeal to persevere in the contest, and all his honour in keeping his engagements with his allies, he cannot put the full force of his dominions in action without pecuniary assistance. Will any man then tell me that, if we cut off all hope of this assistance, he may not be able to persevere in his exertions? Will any man tell me that, if there were no military diversions created upon the Rhine or in the Tyrol, on the north or on the south of France, her numerous armies would not be employed in menacing our territory, and perhaps in invading our coasts? Or will any man tell me that if we withhold pecuniary assistance from the Emperor, that refusal may not lead to a separate peace between Germany and France? The difference, then, is not carrying on a defensive instead of an offensive war, but it is carrying on a war solely on your part, without any assistance to aid your efforts, or any diversion to divide the force of the enemy, instead of carrying on the war as at present, in conjunction with an ally whose exertions are able to resist the whole military power of France, while your fleets are occupied in protecting your trade and extending your foreign dominions. And do not the advantages which we enjoy, as they may be estimated from this short and simple statement, infinitely more than counterbalance any temporary inconvenience that we may sustain from the mode in which they are procured? The hon. gentleman took occasion to introduce the subject of a report from a secret committee of which he is a member, but which is not yet before the House. I should wish, therefore, that the House will wait till the report is produced, and not repose implicit confidence in any of the statements made by the hon. gentleman. I do not know whether the peace establishment came under the inquiry or calculation of that committee. I rather think that it

could not immediately come under their investigation. But whether it did or not, I am happy to assure the House that no such result, nor any thing approaching to it, will be found to arise out of a fair examination of the circumstances of the country.

But I find I am discussing the question on grounds, on which I ought not to object to it. Upon the train of argument which I was before pursuing, it is easy to show that, if we do not intend to lay down our arms, if we mean to continue any method of exertion, if it be our wish to be in a situation to persevere in hostilities, if hostilities are necessary from the overbearing pride and unjust pretensions of the enemy, it cannot be a measure of economy to abandon the plan of availing ourselves of the co-operation of his imperial majesty by contributing money to his assistance. When we consider the amount of the expense, and the magnitude of the service, there is no ground of comparison between them! Upon what data does the hon. gentleman assume that the measure will lead to any difference of expense at all? He may consider the war as unjust as it was unnecessary, and as ill conducted in its process as it was groundlessly undertaken: he may, if he pleases, think that the French were right in every thing in which this country thought them wrong, but he does not contend that we should this day throw down our arms and make unconditional submission to the enemy. Overlooking, then, the consideration of additional security arising from the co-operation of the Emperor, and the effects of that co-operation acting upon the spirit, the trade, the manufactures, and the population of the country; overlooking, I say, these considerations (and surely when I put them aside none will suppose that I view them as trifling or unimportant) let him calculate the additional direct expense which it requires to protect our coasts from a vigilant and enterprising foe, who would have nothing to do but to molest his only remaining enemy. Reduce the public expenses as much as you can, and let the inevitable burthens of the war be alleviated as much as possible by well judged economy in the different branches of the public service; but be not so weak or so treacherous to yourselves as to blot out one part of an estimate under pretence of economy, while you create another service which must be provided for at a much larger expense, and which would

tend to aggravate the evil which it is your intention to cure.

The hon. gentleman does not recommend his motion, or rather he does not ground his opposition to the measure hereafter to be proposed upon the tendency of this opposition, to accelerate the restoration of peace. This, however, is an object which on no political question ought to be set out of view, and therefore I shall say a few words upon the subject in this point of light. Of those who wish for peace, there are two classes. There are some, and of these a very numerous body, who are desirous for peace, as soon as peace can be obtained on safe and honourable terms. To such it must be clear that the object of their wishes cannot be secured by laying aside the means of action. But there are others, and the hon. gentleman may be one, who are of opinion that, for the attainment of peace, there are no terms which we ought not to accept, no law to which we ought not to submit. Even those who entertain these humiliating ideas, would be guilty of insanity, were they to add to the degradation by laying aside one of the weapons to which they have to trust for the acquisition of their darling object. Such conduct would betray a desire not only to take any terms which the enemy might be pleased to dictate, but to take every means to render these terms as bad as possible. It is evident, then, that the measure in agitation affects the question of peace, both as it depends upon the period of its restoration, and the terms on which it may be concluded. Did the reasonings upon the subject leave any doubt as to the fact, the conduct of the enemy through the whole course of the war would put the matter beyond all question.

Having said so much upon the topics of economy and the return of peace, I proceed to advert to it as a means of restoring public credit. Now, what does the hon. gentleman here assume? He assumes, that the great operating cause of the present embarrassments has been foreign remittances; and upon this assumption, he objects to any farther advances being made to the Emperor. In this view of the subject, I shall beg leave to throw out a few suggestions, which will lead not only to a conclusion different from his, but to a conclusion directly opposite. The hon. gentleman has had the goodness to give me intimation, that he has some serious charges to prefer against me. Of

course, I shall probably have opportunities enough in future of explaining my own conduct; and with the decision of the House, I shall most willingly abide, whatever that decision may be. As this is not the subject of discussion on this night, perhaps it is improper in me to say any thing upon it. I would only beg leave to observe, that the printed papers, upon which the hon. gentleman commented, contain the written representations of the bank, and, it is added, my answers. These answers, however, were not given in writing, and what is there printed under this title, is merely minutes of what passed between me and the governor and deputy-governor of the bank, reported for the perusal of the bank-directors, without having been previously submitted to my examination; nor did I so much as see them till just before they were printed. The hon. gentleman argues, that advances to the Emperor were calculated to produce ruinous consequences, that ruinous consequences did ensue, therefore, that the advances made to the Emperor were productive of ruinous consequences. This is very short logic: but if he will not believe it to be false upon my authority, if it is not too much to ask, let him compare it with information. In order to make his conclusion good, he must show that the remittances made to the Emperor actually did diminish the cash in the bank, and that the issue of the order in council was occasioned by the diminution produced by these remittances. If it should appear that these advances did not occasion any diminution of cash at the time that they were made; on the contrary, that the balance of cash rather increased, and that the mischief so much and so justly lamented arose from the operation of causes widely different, then, in justice as well as prudence, the House ought not to ascribe an evil to a cause different from that in which it originated.

The hon. gentleman preferred another charge against me, which I heard without much dismay—that I had persisted in sending money to the Emperor when I was aware that the bank, from the line of conduct I was pursuing, was approaching to a state of insolvency. This, again, he takes for granted without any information upon the subject. If it should turn out that, during the whole period that these remittances were made, so far was I from being aware of the approaching difficulties of the bank, that by the successful opera-

tion of commerce, the balance of exchange for all that time was in favour of this country, insomuch that, if these circumstances had continued, the state of the bank would at this day have been growing better, the hon. gentleman will surely not persist in the accusation, when he finds that the ground on which it was preferred is wholly and completely fallacious. The premises the hon. gentleman may wish to be taken on trust; but to this I object, not wishing to supersede his position by any assertion of my own, but merely because the House are not in possession of materials from which they can infer whether it be true or false. When these materials are before them, perhaps it may be found that the mischief arose from remittances of cash, which were sent to Ireland to a greater extent than usual, and to local alarms in this country, which caused a great run upon the bank for some time before the order in council was issued. This is all the answer which I think I need give to the hon. gentleman's charge of misrepresentation.

I have only a word more to say respecting an expression in the speech from the throne at the opening of the present session. In that speech his majesty was advised to state, that the resources of the country were equal to every exertion—an expression founded certainly not upon a knowledge of the balance of cash or bullion at that time in the Bank, but upon the survey of the general state of trade and manufactures of the kingdom. Our trade and manufactures certainly depend in a considerable degree upon the stability of public credit, which is interwoven with the independence of the country. To preserve that independence, then, is necessary above all things to the restoration of public credit; and next to the preservation of this independence, is the prevention of the danger of a future run upon the Bank. And here we may look at the question in two points of view. Let us first look at the best way to procure the greatest quantity of cash; and if the subject is fairly viewed, I do not despair of convincing the House that the remittance of a sum to the Emperor, instead of obstructing and impeding the influx of cash into the kingdom, will accelerate and increase it. I will grant that, if collateral circumstances did not vary, the balance in our favour would be diminished precisely in proportion to the sum sent abroad. But will it be contended, that

abandoning an ally would have no effect upon the markets of Europe, and that such a step, were it taken by this country, would not influence any of the avenues of her commerce? Such a position is so absurd and untenable, that it would be an insult on the good sense of the House to spend their time in combating it. But a profitable trade depends not only on the state of the purchaser to receive, but of the seller to send. And need I ask what effect it would have upon the zeal, the spirit, the industry, and, consequently, the trade and manufactures of the country, were our coasts to be incessantly threatened by the whole concentrated force of France, which would be the case were the Emperor obliged, in consequence of our refusing to aid him with money, to conclude a separate peace with our common enemy? When the subject, therefore, is viewed in this light, who is so short-sighted as not to see, that the inconvenience which may arise from present exertion would be much more than counterbalanced by the pressure of subsequent events? If the argument be admitted in one case, there is no possible case to which it may not be applied. In short, it may be argued upon the same grounds, that, as soon as you experience the difficulties arising from a drain of cash, you must give up all your foreign connexions, and, upon this principle, you ought to withdraw your protection from all your possessions in the East and West Indies. Of these possessions, for instance, it might be said, "True, they have been accounted extremely valuable, they have yielded great profits, the produce of them has formed a great article of commerce, and been the cause of a vast influx of wealth into the country, but in time of war they put us to an expense; we will save therefore in future the expense of protection." But how? By sacrificing all the present and future advantages which might flow from the possession of them. Precisely the same argument will apply to an ally.

But if the reasoning is just in the view of procuring an influx of cash from abroad, how much stronger is it in the view of promoting circulation at home, which is fully as necessary for the restoration of the credit of the Bank as the other! If our foreign commerce would be affected by the abandonment of an ally, how much more would our internal situation be affected by the pressure which would naturally result from an enemy increasing in

strength in a direct ratio to our inability to resist his efforts! Would not the natural consequence be a new alarm, accompanied with a disposition to hoard? And thus the immediate cause of the mischief would be renewed. I trust that, though there might be some cause for the late alarm, it is now almost gone by; and I am convinced, that the more the state of the country is inquired into, the less ground there is for despondency, or the apprehension of any danger which Englishmen may not boldly meet with the fortitude which belongs to the national character. While our object is however to remove alarm, and to restore the public credit, is it wise or prudent to court a greater alarm? Can it be expected that the effects of the greater would be less serious than of the slighter alarm, or that even the same effects would not do much more harm? Those, then, who look to the restoration of public credit in the Bank of England as their favourite object, should be the last persons to counteract a measure which has an obvious tendency to produce that event to which their wishes and their endeavours tend: and how the hon. gentleman can claim the benefit of the argument drawn from his subject, I have yet to learn, nor can I even guess.

There is still another topic left, upon which I feel myself impelled to say a few words, namely, the additional security that would be given to credit by the restoration of peace. Whether the best mode of obtaining peace is to run the risk of losing the aid of the Emperor, is a question upon which there exists but little doubt. We have seen long ago that the uniform object of the enemy's policy has been to disunite us from our ally. This design has manifested itself in the course of several negotiations and discussions, and we have seen a similar policy too successfully practised with other powers, who were formerly leagued with us against France, and who have been seduced, some into a neutrality, others into open hostility against us. She has publicly and repeatedly declared her wish to make a separate peace with Austria, that she might be enabled to dictate terms to us, or to carry on the war against this country with greater effect. It is but very lately that we have heard that France has, a short time ago, made distinct overtures of peace to the Emperor to the exclusion of this country, and that

he, with his accustomed honour and good faith, instead of accepting of them, communicated them to the court of St. James's, and renewed his declaration to the enemy, that he would not conclude a peace except in conjunction with Great Britain, justly persuaded that no peace can be concluded on a permanent foundation, but one founded upon a due regard to the individual claims, and the common interests of the different powers of Europe. Putting apart, therefore, the obligations of gratitude and honour, it must be obvious to every one whose views are not confined within the narrowest and most contracted limits, that the best mode of attaining the desirable object of peace is, to persevere in making a common cause with the Emperor, and aiding him with those means which his own dominions do not furnish, but with which the resources of this country enable us to supply him. It is for this House to determine whether they will give success to the intrigues of the enemy, which have hitherto been frustrated by the fidelity and magnanimity of our ally, or whether they will persevere in those measures, which are most likely to bring the contest to a safe and honourable issue. To their judgment and their spirit I leave the decision, convinced that they will act in a manner becoming the representatives of a great and powerful nation. On these grounds I think there is no use in countenancing the present measure; and as it does not commit the House to give any opinion upon the subject, I shall give it my negative.

Mr. Fox said:—My hon. friend has made out a strong *prima facie* case against sending any more money to the Emperor; but he has not upon this ground alone desired the House to adopt any definitive resolution. He has moved for a committee to examine whether any farther information can be obtained to remove the impression which the first view is calculated to produce. It appears from the documents before the House, that the right hon. gentleman has broken the promise which he made to the bank directors, and that he persevered in remitting money to the Emperor in spite of their earnest remonstrances. When I find that the opinion of the bank directors was so decided as to the danger of sending money out of the country at that period, I am ready to refuse my assent to a continuance of the system now. But the right hon. gentleman says, that, perhaps, the bank

directors may be of a different opinion now as to the effects of such a measure, and that their prediction, as to its consequences, has been contradicted, although, the event which they anticipated has ultimately taken place from other causes. But the very purpose of the inquiry now proposed is, to ascertain what are the sentiments of the bank directors, and to obtain their opinion of the effects which, in the present state of the country, any farther advances to the Emperor are likely to produce. The right hon. gentleman urged one objection to the motion, which, had it come from a person of inferior abilities and authority, I should have considered as an idle quibble. The right hon. gentleman says, that the motion is either meant to bring the House to a decision this night, or, if it admitted farther delay, it cannot affect the object of applying a styptic to the wound, of which the body is bleeding to death. But though my hon. friend does not mean to hurry the House into the committee to night, three days need not elapse before the House come to a decision. The right hon. gentleman, however, opposes the forms of the House, and says, that the subject will be better discussed in a committee of supply. But is not time of material consideration when public credit and confidence depend upon the result? Is it not of importance that the country should know, as soon as possible, that no more money is to be sent abroad? If the decision is connected with the recovery of public credit, and the restoration of the Bank to its former situation, the speed with which the determination is adopted is an argument of the greatest weight. If the discussion is postponed, the circumstances in which the House will afterwards have to decide, may be materially changed. His majesty may enter into conditional engagements for the payment of sums; and though we know that the House is not bound by such engagements, will any man tell me that the House would be as free to decide when his majesty called upon them to enable him to fulfil his engagement, as before it was contracted? But, what security is there that, before the opportunity arrives for the House to decide in the manner proposed by the right hon. gentleman, advances may not actually be made, and money be sent abroad to the Emperor? Last year the right hon. gentleman remitted to the Emperor a million and a half without the knowledge or con-

sent of parliament: and what security have we that he will not again make a merit of acting in the same manner? Whatever other ministers might have pleaded against such a supposition, the right hon. gentleman cannot remove the suspicion, as he has established the precedent by what he has already done, and under the slight censure which was passed upon his conduct, may avail himself of the pretence of necessity to adopt a similar measure. Will the House, then, upon the prospect of a full discussion upon a future occasion, trust, that the minister will not anticipate that discussion which they are afterwards to pronounce? The right hon. gentleman said, truly, that all the House had to do was, to choose between the advantages and disadvantages which every view of the subject presents; to balance the evils of sending more money abroad, in the present circumstances of the country, with the ill consequences which would arise from a refusal of farther pecuniary aid to the Emperor. On an occasion so momentous as the present, I am not to be imposed upon by words. It is not the quantum of the advance which forms the material subject of consideration. A million and a half, under the present circumstances of the country, might be attended with more ruinous consequences than ten times the sum in different times would produce. What, however, would be the consequences of a refusal? The right hon. gentleman says, that it is not merely the difference of an offensive or defensive war; the consequences, he says, would be more important. But, admitting the utmost extent of the advantages which we could reap from the exertions of the Emperor, they must be compared with the certain evils by which they must be purchased. In my opinion, the recovery of Lombardy, and even the re-conquest of Belgium, would be no equivalent for the ruin with which public credit would be overwhelmed, and for the daily breach of faith which you would be obliged to commit against the public creditor. Has the right hon. gentleman forgotten the language which he so vauntingly employed in the last parliament during the first years of the war? Does he remember how often he told us; that the brilliant victories of the French Republic, were more than compensated by the ruin of their public credit, and by the financial sacrifices by which they were purchased?

We then contended, that with regard to France such reasoning was ill-founded. With regard to this country, however, it must be conclusive. Is France so limited in population, so defective in internal resources, so dependent upon commerce and manufactures, for the sources of power and of prosperity, that the least shock to her credit endangers the fabric of her wealth and her greatness? Is England, on the other hand, so fertile in territory, so abundant in internal resources, and in population, so little dependent upon the adventitious advantages of commerce, that the ruin of her credit will less sensibly enfeeble her power, and the disorder of her finances less affect the basis of her prosperity? The advantageous situation in which, from various circumstances, the right hon. gentleman has been placed, has spoiled the character of his mind. From the implicit confidence he has obtained, he imagines he can advance positions which he may maintain or reject according as his purpose requires, and that the country will follow all his changes, and listen to him with equal conviction. He has now, however, brought the country to that situation in which he must no longer expect to be heard with the same indulgence. The right hon. gentleman says, that the Emperor may conclude a separate peace, if he no longer receives pecuniary aid from this country. Here I cannot help making a most bitter complaint against members. Is it true that the Emperor would be justified in making a separate peace, if he was no longer to be supported by supplies of money from this country? Was this a part of the treaty with him? Was it understood that he was only to continue the contest so long as his armies were paid by British money? Why did not ministers explain to the public the terms on which the co-operation of the Emperor was to be obtained? Why did they represent him as an independent ally, who was to support his own cause, and defray his own expense. Last parliament, when the Prussian subsidy was under consideration, I was rebuked by the right hon. gentleman because I said that there was no end to the system of subsidies, that Spain, that the Emperor, might likewise demand to be subsidized, or refuse to continue the contest. This idea was received with the utmost displeasure by the right hon. gentleman. Spain and Prussia, however, made separate peace; and now we are told that the Emperor

must abandon the contest, unless he is to be supported. Had ministers come fairly forward, and avowed that such was the condition of the treaty with the Emperor, compliant as the last parliament were, I am convinced they would have hesitated; certain I am, that it would never have been sanctioned by the country. At the beginning of the war ministers told us with triumph, that the contest was not to be carried on at the expense of this country, but that we were to have the general concurrence of the powers of Europe with subsidies. Now, however, we find that the common cause is to be maintained at the expense of Great Britain. The right hon. gentleman says, that the French have shown, that they wish to disunite us from our allies, and to conclude a separate peace with the Emperor. But in the policy which they employ, the French directory may have indirect, as well as direct objects in view. If they conceive that the contest is a contest of finance, they may esteem a victory over the bank of England as of more importance than a victory on the Scheldt, the Rhine, or the Po. They may tempt the Emperor with offers of peace to give force to his demands of pecuniary aid from this country, and to support that system which must terminate in the destruction of our finances.—The right hon. gentleman argues, too, that, without the diversion which the Emperor affords, the troops of the enemy would be employed upon the frontiers nearer to our coasts. Here the state of Ireland must occur to give additional weight to the danger of an attempt of invasion. No man can entertain a worse opinion of the state of that country than I do. No man can attach to ministers a more severe responsibility for the measures which have led to that fatal situation than I do. No man can be more fully convinced than I am, that the safety of Ireland, on the late attempt, was owing not to the prudence of ministers, but to the elements. But was it from any want of land forces that the attempt of the enemy was frustrated? No, surely. If they had had 100,000 men instead of 20,000, could they have been more successful? Can we say, then, that it was from a want of land forces that the attempt against Ireland was not carried into effect?—But it may be said, that their command of larger bodies of troops might facilitate their view upon Great Britain. I have no hesitation in saying, that there

is little reason to apprehend that such an attempt will take place. I do not deny, however, that it might occasion considerable alarm. But will the sending of money to the Emperor diminish that alarm, or guard against its consequences? Measures to repel invasion have already been taken, and have occasioned harassing laws and intolerable hardships to the poor. Nor do I believe that it would be thought necessary to go beyond the scale of preparation which ministers have thought proper to employ. But when the right hon. gentleman spoke so much of the diversions which the Emperor was to make, and the advantages with which they would be attended, I expected that the old principles would have been maintained. In former wars I admit the advantage of these diversions; but the general ground on which they were deemed useful, was to prevent the French, by expensive diversions, from bestowing that care on their marine which would be dangerous to this country. I should be very sorry that such an increase should take place in the French marine as to render them dangerous to this country: but I am fully convinced, that though the war were to last two years more (a period to which no man can look for the continuance of the war) the French would not be able to cope with the fleets of this country in the European seas. I will not deny that some disadvantages might arise from the want of this diversion. But, then, look at the other side. The question, however, is, whether the credit and the confidence of the country would suffer most from the Emperor making a separate peace, or from sending money out of the country, contrary to the opinion of the Bank. But how then is the credit and the confidence of the public to be restored? The right hon. gentleman says, by the influx of money from the balance of exchange. For my own part, I am persuaded that confidence is more required than specie. The right hon. gentleman asked, if the House would agree to abandon Europe to its fate?—an expression, indeed, so general, that the meaning is not very clear. But if the credit of the country is to be restored by the balance of trade, and by every thing connected with its commercial prosperity, will the right hon. gentleman contend, that the continent at peace is less likely to consume and to pay for our commodities than when distracted by the miseries of war? Which of the plans

proposed, then, is most likely to effect the restoration of credit? The right hon. gentleman rests his expectations entirely upon theory. We appeal to experience for the proof of the mischief which the measure has already produced. The bank directors predicted the event which we have seen realised.—But the right hon. gentleman says, that though the prediction of the Bank was fulfilled, it was not justified, and that the proportion of cash in the Bank continued the same after the advances had been made to the Emperor, from which so much mischief had been anticipated. But, without being particularly acquainted with the state of the cash in the Bank at this period, I am fully convinced, from the nature of the case, that the cash must have diminished. The argument of the right hon. gentleman proves too much. He surely does not mean to say, that if the exchange continued favourable to this country, it would not have been favourable in a much higher degree, if no such advances had been made. But this balance of exchange, however, had not been sufficient to save the Bank; and they must be sanguine indeed, who expect that the mischief of the measure will be remedied by this supply, or that it will be adequate to the necessity of the case. I confess I read with astonishment the statements which ministers introduced into his majesty's speech at the opening of the parliament. I will not go into details, but I would desire any man to read the accounts of the situation of the manufacturers in Yorkshire, in Manchester, in Devonshire, and judge whether the language of the speech describes the true state of the country.—I must complain also of the monstrous falsehood which ministers have introduced into this speech. At the moment when the strongest representations were made by the Bank of the danger of the system they pursued, the Speech talks of "the temporary embarrassments which had been felt," and in such a manner as to infer that they had now ceased.—But I think I can discover upon what ground the minister advances this assertion, and the manner in which he intended it to be understood. The temporary embarrassments he had felt had arisen from the refusal of the Bank to co-operate with his views; and when he represents them as having ceased, I understand him to allude to the accommodation which he obtained, upon promises which he never intended

to keep. The right hon. gentleman cautions the House, that the minutes which my hon. friend quoted were drawn up by the directors of the Bank, without having been submitted to his inspection. Had the right hon. gentleman been impeached at the bar of the other House, he might, no doubt, have availed himself of this legal objection to their evidence. But can it be supposed that the directors were men of such dull understandings that they were unable to comprehend the answer of the right hon. gentleman to their representations? Was it that the right hon. gentleman had so little command of the English language that he could not explain himself so as to be understood?—Whether is public credit and confidence, then, most likely to be regained by the measure which the right hon. gentleman proposes, or that which we recommend? The right hon. gentleman says, that commerce would suffer by the alarm of invasion, because it would withdraw from labour those who are now usefully employed. This evil, however, had already been incurred by the measures which have been adopted for the defence of the country. The stoppage of the Bank was not the effect of the alarm of invasion, but the run upon it was occasioned by a want of confidence in the pecuniary security of the country. Every part of government service, the army, the navy, was in arrear, and the embarrassments struck an alarm into the people. If any thing can produce a doubt of the solidity of the Bank, or prevent the restoration of its credit, it will be the obstinate perseverance of ministers in the system which has already been attended with such fatal consequences, and the negligence of the House in continuing patiently to acquiesce, and blindly to confide. Such a perseverance I should dread more than any attempt of invasion, or even a landing effected by the enemy. I cannot, upon the present occasion, admit it to be a narrow view of the subject to consider the restoration of credit as the grand point to which our exertions ought to be directed, almost to the exclusion of every other. The situation of this country is different from that of France. The credit of France was but a small part of its general resource; but here it is the life and soul of our power and prosperity. It is not so much the quantum of the advance, or the saving in point of economy that is to be considered, but it is the effect which sending any sums of money abroad

is likely to produce when connected with the situation of the country, and the opinion which the Bank have expressed of its consequences; but in the view of peace it is of the first importance to labour for the restoration of public credit. The French look more to the state of the Bank of England and to public credit than to the event of a battle: and whatever tends to protract or to endanger the cure, will raise their hopes, and increase their pretensions.—I do not wish to recur to the commencement of the war; but it must be remembered, that the evil of war was admitted; but it was deemed a less evil than the remote evils we had to dread from the Scheldt, Holland, and Savoy, continuing in the power of the French. Four years have we suffered the immediate evils of war in a degree unparalleled, and now we are farther than ever from the security against the remote dangers which were dreaded. Take care, then, lest you expose yourselves to all the evils of the remedy, without being able to effect a cure. But it is said, would you throw away one of your weapons when you may still be obliged to continue the contest? Yes, I would answer, throw away one weapon, if you will then be able to wield the remainder for a longer period. I would rather contend with less now, to be able to contend more effectually afterwards. If the war is not terminated by the present campaign, and if thirty or forty millions are required for the public service, I would ask the right hon. gentleman, whether the difficulty of borrowing would not be more severely felt, and the impotence of the country affect its interests more deeply? I would have the efforts of the country less now, that they may be more lasting. That we should fall unarmed before the enemy, is far more likely to ensue from unlimited prodigality, than from a cautious husbanding of our strength and resources. I know that general principles are against that contracted scale which I recommend; but there are occasions when general principles are not applicable, and when to deviate from them is to act with true wisdom and sound policy. The right hon. gentleman talks of peace; but does he take any means for its attainment? Will he, or can he take those steps by which that blessing may be restored? The country is convinced that he neither can nor will; and, so far from expecting the restoration of credit from

the blessings of peace, we must think of supporting credit in such a manner as to be able to go on for the period to which the war may be protracted. It is now a war of finance, and every year we must be in a worse condition. In the course of the last year stocks have fallen 27 per cent; and it is to be feared that they will continue to fall. It is not to the stoppage of the Bank, nor to the alarm of invasion, but to the general state of our credit and resources that this is to be ascribed. If this year a loan can with difficulty be negotiated with the stocks at 49, how must the difficulty be increased, if it is found necessary to have another next year? If I cannot succeed with the right hon. gentleman in putting a stop to the career he is running, let me implore the House to interpose between the madness of the minister and the ruin of the government.

Sir *W. Pulteney* was for making farther advances to the Emperor, but he thought the restoration of credit the first object. He said, that a small sum would do a great deal with the Emperor, because there was none of that lavish expenditure abroad, which prevailed here. The Emperor could not go on without assistance, because he had no means of borrowing. The Emperor's expenses for two years of the war had only exceeded his revenue by one million. The schemes of the chancellor of the exchequer, had produced no effect in lowering the discounts on government paper. He blamed his want of economy, but was against laying aside any weapon which could enable us to prosecute the war.

Lord *G. Cavendish* said, that he should be no enemy to subsidies, if the country was in a situation to afford them; but the prodigality of ministers had so reduced it, that, without a thorough knowledge of our financial situation, we should add to our distress by a new drain of money from the country.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. Sheridan - - - }	87
	{ General Tarleton - - }	
NOES	{ Mr. John Smyth - - - }	266
	{ Mr. Sargeant - - - }	

So it passed in the negative.

Debate on Mr. Ellis's Motion for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Negroes in the West Indies.] April 6. Mr. *Charles Ellis* rose and said:—In order to

lay before the House a precise statement of the nature of the motion which I am about to make, perhaps the fairest mode of proceeding may be to state, in the first instance, what it is not. I am in fairness bound to state that this measure proceeds upon principles diametrically opposite to those of the Abolition bill. I have always felt it my duty to oppose that bill: and I conceive it to be so radically faulty, that I could not, under any modification in the present situation of the colonies, accede to such a measure. I reprobate the principle of the trade, and sincerely wish for its complete termination. At the same time, where the subject is so complicated, and its decision involves such a variety of important interests, I cannot feel myself justified in confining my consideration of it to the principle alone. If the question were changed to a deliberation, whether a system should or should not now be established, which must depend for its future existence on a trade in slaves, the discussion might then be confined to the merits of such a trade: and, arguing simply on that principle, it would be impossible for any man of common humanity to hesitate in foregoing whatever advantages might be expected from a system so founded. But where the evil is of long previous existence, where it is connected with a political and commercial system, in which the general interests of the country, and the property of individuals, are deeply involved—whatever feelings may be excited by the consideration of the principle of the trade alone, they must be checked by a sense of our duty towards individuals whose claims, we cannot, in justice, refuse to take into consideration. I feel that we are bound to weigh well, whether, consistently with that duty, we can pursue the direct and obvious road to the attainment of our object.

In my own particular instance, having, as I conceive, good grounds for a conviction, that the plan proposed by the advocates for the Abolition bill cannot but be productive of severe injury to all persons in any way connected with the colonies; and believing, that so much individual calamity cannot be independent of the general interests of the country, I have turned my views to a very different plan for the attainment of this object. On this point gentlemen may possibly suppose that I am not likely to be impartial; that the natural sensibility to personal interest may preclude from a pretension to correctness

of judgment. To this I must answer, that even if there be ground for such a distrust, the prejudice which has warped my judgment has had equal influence on that of the whole body of the West Indians; if ours be a prejudice, being so general, it is at least worth an investigation.

But, endeavouring to put out of the question my feelings in that character, dismissing, for the present, all reference to the effects of an Abolition bill in the West-India islands, and considering it merely as a member of this House, I cannot avoid, in another point of view, observing a very strong additional objection. This objection is, that I do not believe it would be found competent to the effect expected. I do not believe it would annihilate the slave trade. Here I must beg to be understood, that I do not mean to call in question either the wisdom of this House in the mode of framing such an act, or its ability to enforce it. There can be no doubt, that from the moment such an act shall have passed, the trade, as it is now carried on, must cease. The evil which I dread is, that the trade suddenly so stopped, would be diverted into an unlawful channel. I do not presume to give my own opinion as authority, that such would be the consequence of that measure. I am proud to have an opportunity of resting it upon the sanction of a right hon. gentleman, formerly a member of this House, whose sentiments are not unfrequently quoted on each side of the House with a veneration that seems to stamp them as a classical authority: a veneration which I myself feel, for many reasons in a peculiar degree. Many years ago, previous to a time when the hon. framer of the Abolition bill first agitated this question, that gentleman (Mr. Burke) applied his great abilities and extensive knowledge to the formation of a plan, for the regulation of the trade on the coast of Africa, and the civilization of the negroes in the West India islands.* He was not insensible of the danger of establishing an illicit trade, which, without furnishing an adequate or efficient supply of labourers to the colonies, would necessarily, from the mode of carrying it on, be productive of aggravated misery to the Africans. The probability that such would be the consequence of an abolition, and the fatal effects of such an alternative, appear to be among not the least weighty of his mo-

tives for preferring a toleration of the trade under strict regulations, and the superintendence of this country, trusting for its termination to a system of civilization in the West India islands. The peculiarity of those climates afford facilities to a contraband trade, in a degree of which gentlemen may not be aware. I could, on this point, only repeat with less clearness, and still less weight, the arguments stated to the late House of Commons by a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Dundas) who, in addition to the very extensive information which appeared evident in a most able speech, was possessed of peculiar means of estimating the difficulties, which, from the nature of those countries, must stand in the way of the most vigilant exertions. Wherever there exists a strong interest, operating as a temptation to the evasion of a prohibitory law, the difficulty of enforcing it must be great. In the present case, the temptation held out by interest, is stronger even than that afforded by the facility. It is the temptation of an interest, in which the very existence of the colonies is, by the colonists, considered to be involved. If, indeed, it were possible, that immediately on the passing of an act of abolition, those persons who would probably feel, that in the course of the discussions on this subject, their characters had not been treated with peculiar lenity, perhaps hardly with candour, should immediately acknowledge the justice of all the calumnies which had been heaped upon them and agree to use their best exertions to preclude each other from employing what they thought the only means of saving their properties from ruin, then, indeed, an act of abolition might be perfectly efficient. If, on the contrary, that measure must rest for its efficiency solely on strong penal laws, I much doubt whether any would be found adequate to the accomplishment of the object. The means seem calculated to defeat that end. It is the effect of excessively severe penalties, to make those who are charged to inflict them remiss in their execution of the law; and I am persuaded, that whatever menaces may have been used in the heat of debate by gentlemen, who have thought they saw in this argument such a doubt of the power of parliament as ought only to be repelled by such an answer, I am persuaded they would, in their cooler moments, be unwilling to put their threats in execution. When, therefore, I state these doubts as

* See Burke's Works, Vol. 9, p. 283.

to the power of enforcing a prohibition of the slave trade, I must beg not to be understood to call in question the power which this country might in its wrath exert for the punishment of a disobedient and refractory colony; when I question the means of this country, I do not calculate them according to its physical force, but in reference to the usual mildness of this House, and the dispassionate justice of its decisions.

If I have entered into the discussion of the merits of the Abolition bill farther than has been expected, I have done so, because I consider the statement of objections with which I have troubled the House, to be a necessary preface to the measure which I mean to submit to their consideration. My object is, to propose to the House a plan calculated to produce the same effect by different means. Hitherto gentlemen may possibly have considered themselves in the unfortunate dilemma of either agreeing to the bill proposed for the abolition of the slave trade, notwithstanding any objections to which it might appear liable, or of refusing to take any steps at all, for the purpose of remedying the evil. The present alternative offered to those gentlemen who wish for a reform, is this: Whether they will completely disregard the representations and objections urged against the Abolition bill, and adopt that measure or; whether they will give a trial to the plan, which proposes to itself the same end; which, in its progress, will not be incompatible with the interest and property of individuals, will not create temptations, operating to defeat its object, and cannot, for its complete execution, require such exertions of severity as I should in any case deprecate, and such as I cannot suppose any gentleman to approve, but in a case of unavoidable necessity. I presume it will be admitted, that this necessity cannot exist, unless it be supposed impossible to carry into effect either of the following objects:—The one is, the civilization of the negroes on the coast of Africa, which would preclude the possibility of a supply. The other is, the civilization of the negroes in the West India islands, to a degree, which, by obviating the causes of a decrease in the population will render the supply unnecessary. From the civilization in the negroes in Africa, we might look forward to such salutary effects; but then it could only be at a very distant period. In the mean time, the plan has in it so much

benevolence, that it is impossible to refuse the tribute of praise due to those gentlemen who have engaged in an establishment on so worthy a motive; and two important advantages will, in a very early stage, result from it. In the immediate neighbourhood of its territory, the happy effects which it will produce on the manners of the Africans, as far as its influence can extend, will at least in part, accomplish the purpose of the founders of the establishment. At the same time, the information which may be drawn from the publications of that society, by affording an insight into the manners and characters of the Africans, will essentially aid the colonists in the islands, in the adoption of such regulations as may be most congenial with the character of the negroes.

I now come to the other object, that of the civilization of the negroes in the colonies. It has been found upon past experience, that the population of negro slaves has, in every one of the West India islands, invariably decreased. If a remedy can be found to this evil, the termination of the slave trade must inevitably follow. But the colonists insist, that it is upon this point that we have hitherto been at issue; that till such a remedy can be found, the existence of the colonies must depend upon the continuance of that trade.—In the course of the agitation of this question, it has been argued on all sides, that the failure in the population has proceeded from the following causes: From the system of manners and morality of the negroes: from diseases, some of them consequent on that system of manners; some peculiar to Africans; and from the disproportion of the sexes. I presume it is unnecessary to insist, that, for the purpose of establishing a general reformation, some general system must be formed and carefully enforced. That, without very minute information concerning the manners and character of the negroes, and the nature of the country, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to draw up any plan, which shall be free from great defects; that it is only from the result of experiment, that safe and practicable remedies are to be expected; and that, in the execution of a plan, however formed, and with whatever merits, a careful superintendence is no less necessary to its success. I mean it is necessary that those persons, to whom the superintendence is entrusted, should possess, not merely a zeal for the success of the cause, but the

immediate power of seeing the effects of the plan; of judging, whether in any points it may fail of the effect expected from it, and whether in any others, it may clash either with important interests, or with justice. I believe, therefore, I do not say too much, when I assert, that the colonial legislatures of the different islands are the only persons fit for the formation and execution of such a plan.

When I say that I consider a reform in the manners and morality of the negroes to be necessary, I must explain, that I do not mean to state them to be a vicious race: on the contrary, they are in their dispositions, good and tractable; highly sensible to kind treatment, and capable of very extraordinary attachment. The point in their morality to which I allude, does not proceed from any defect in their natural dispositions; it is the effect of the manners, the prejudices, and the religion of the Africans. Their religion is either a corrupt Deism or Mahometanism, and natural passion has received the sanction of this religion, in establishing a system of polygamy. That system, in its best state, is supposed not to be favourable to population; in the West Indies, it has been found to be peculiarly fatal to it; it has there been followed by as little strictness in the morality of the one sex, as it inculcates in that of the other. The House will not think it necessary for me to dwell on the effects which such a system of manners must produce. I will only observe, that in such a system, the connexions, to which the negroes give the name of marriage, have not a very correct right to such a title, and cannot but be unfavourable to the general mass of population. In consequence of the right which every negro claims, of living with as many wives as he can maintain, the offspring will often want that tender care and attention which, in a system of equal marriages, instinct secures to it from both parents.—But this is only one, of many aggravated and multiplied evils, which arise from the same liberty, when exercised, as is very generally the case in our islands, indiscriminately, by either sex. The remedy to this evil cannot be looked for from compulsion: absolute as the power of the master has been supposed to be, it cannot be carried to this extent; the exertion of authority, in direct contradiction to their general prejudices and their passions, would be strongly resisted. A reform in their man-

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ners can only be expected from mild and gradual means; but from the impression of a moral duty, and the more immediate inducement of interest, it may with reason be expected.

It has been asserted, that by a strict attention to the moral instruction of the young negroes, the licentious system of manners may be corrected. I myself concur in this opinion, and do believe that the next generation might, by such means, be brought to consider marriage as a religious contract. But what measures the colonial legislature may think best calculated to produce this effect, I cannot presume, specifically, to point out. Perhaps a plan on the same system as the Sunday schools, so happily established in this country, might, in the West Indies, be likewise attended with good effects. For the purpose of securing the means of instruction, encouragement might be afforded to proper persons of the clergy to establish themselves, and superintend schools in the colonies. In using the word instruction, I beg to be understood, that I do not mean that it ought to extend farther than it does among the common people in this country: indeed, until the negroes can be attached to the soil, it ought not, from motives of humanity towards them, to be carried farther than the mere inculcating of moral duties: perhaps, while they continue liable to be sold from one plantation to another, any degree of farther civilization may be only a circumstance of aggravation. I am also convinced, that an additional, though less immediate, advantage might be expected from the zeal of a well-chosen and more numerous clergy, by means of the effect which they would produce on the morals and manners of the lower class of white inhabitants, who, from their employments on our plantations, have the most immediate connexion with the negroes, and whose example must have considerable influence. Indeed, much of the improvement which has hitherto taken place in the situation of our negroes, may be attributed to that which has taken place in the manners of this class of persons, whom we have received from the mother country. The wishes of the colonists to attend to that important point, the moral instruction of the negroes, have hitherto met with a considerable obstacle, from the difficulty of finding a sufficient number of persons properly qualified for so important and confidential a trust. A most

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confidential trust it would be, from the influence which it would give over the minds of the negroes; an influence which, if abused for the purpose of inculcating principles more congenial to their passions and tempers than to their duties of labour and industry, might produce effects fatal to the existence of the colonies themselves. Much, however, may, on this point, be effected by individual and gradual exertions; and it is to the encouragement of such exertions, that the legislature of Jamaica has principally directed its attention, the inadequate number of its clergy, the difficulty of finding persons properly qualified for the charge, and the impossibility of maintaining so liberal a religious establishment as is usual in European countries, having prevented them from perfecting at once so complicated and expensive a system.

The next point to which I should look for the accomplishment of this object is, the more immediate influence of temptation and interest. I express myself thus generally and vaguely, because, after having stated that I consider the colonial legislatures to be the only persons competent to form a plan of regulations, it would ill become me to enter into details, which would have no better authority to rest upon than the judgment of an individual, and for the execution of which I could not promise. But, that the House may not suppose I have formed my opinion without some specific grounds, I will shortly state the heads of some regulations, from which I do conceive that much good may result: for instance; by holding out encouragement to the young negroes to marry at an early age. This might be done by the proprietor taking upon himself the little details of expense which may attend their first establishment, so as to afford them, at the same time, a provision for their future subsistence. In the settlement of African negroes, by taking care that the Creole negroes, under whose protection they may be placed, shall be such as are industrious, of a good character, and of a proportionate age. By giving annual rewards to the women, in proportion to the number of their children, and by establishing distinctions, such as are likely to be the most gratifying to their vanity, and bestowing them on all those who have families, who are industrious, or, from any other reason, have a claim to peculiar favour—by similar marks of degradation

to the profligate of either sex—by holding out encouragement of various kinds, for the purpose of ensuring the strictest attention to the health of the children during the first periods of their infancy. It may be said, these are undoubtedly regulations within the means of any individual; to this I must answer, that the greatest attention has been paid on all these points, by very many proprietors, with great success. It is from the exertions of individuals, that the greatest advantage is to be expected; and the legislature may possibly hold out the farther temptation of interest to the proprietors or to the managers of estates, either by a modification of the taxes, or by some other means; so as to secure a general and zealous co-operation, in employing the means of moral instruction, or the more direct influence of temptations of various kinds, for the purpose of promoting habits of industry and decorum.

Another cause of the decreasing population has been stated to be the diseases, many of them peculiar ones, to which the negroes are liable. On this point, I cannot suggest any means of farther improvement: the planters cannot be accused of inattention to their duty; no estate is without the advantage of constant medical care; and the legislature has taken a very efficient step to secure a strict attention to the health of the negroes, by exacting a list of the deaths and births on each estate, accompanied by a statement of the causes of the deaths, given in by the surgeon on oath. Experience and practice will probably lead to the discovery of remedies hitherto unknown to several of the diseases; but a more immediate benefit may, on this point, be expected from an improved state of matters.

The third cause of decrease in the population is, the disproportion of the sexes. For this an immediate remedy may be found, in a regulation of the customs, prohibiting a greater importation of males than of females. If this be one of the most fatal defects in our system, it is fortunate that so easy and effectual a remedy can be afforded. This point is very nearly connected with that to which I first called the attention of the House. I conceive the disproportion between the sexes to be in a very considerable degree a cause of the licentiousness of manners. In a system of polygamy, this disproportion must be expected to operate very

powerfully, in opposition to the effects of moral instruction, or the temptations of vanity or interest, and must prove a very considerable impediment to a reformation in the manners of the negroes. The remedy of it will doubly assist the colonial legislatures in that work, and that remedy lies immediately within the jurisdiction of this House by means of its regulating bill.

I must now beg leave to take notice of two causes to which the failure of population has been attributed, namely, excess of labour, and want of proper food. From the best information which I have been able to obtain, I have no hesitation in denying the existence of either of these causes, at least in the island of Jamaica. The legislature of the country has not, however, trusted these points to the discretion of the proprietors. The hours of labour are restricted, and the intermediate hours of rest and the number of holidays, are determined by the consolidated act. By the same act, every proprietor is bound to keep in cultivation a certain quantity of provision grounds, according to the number of his negroes. This is calculated as a precaution in case the ground allotted to them should fail either from accident, or their own improvidence and neglect, and is, in fact, a double supply; since their own grounds are sufficient, by the employment of only a small part of the time allowed for the purpose of cultivating them, to afford a superfluity. It is not a possible superfluity of which I speak, but I allude to two facts of notoriety; one, that the markets of Jamaica are almost exclusively supplied with vegetables, fruit, and poultry by the negroes; another is, that all the industrious negroes do by these means acquire property.

Having now stated to the House, the spirit of the regulations which may be farther required for improving the situation of the negroes in the islands, I am bound in justice to state also, that I cannot admit the legislature of whose conduct I am best able to judge, that of Jamaica, to be liable to any charge of neglect or inattention. The assembly of Jamaica have taken the whole of the subject into consideration, and, in 1782, undertook a complete revision of the laws which affect the negroes; which with many additions they comprised into one general law, under the name of the Consolidated act. The effects of this act

were carefully attended to, and a second revision of it took place in 1792. This act is formed on principles of so much humanity, and shows such a degree of attention to the morals, the happiness, and the rights of the negroes, as entitles those gentlemen whose work it is to much praise. The situation of the negroes in the West Indies has been so much involved in the question of the slave trade, that a law specifying the respective duties and rights of the master and the slave, cannot but be familiar to every gentleman who has formed an opinion on this subject. It has, however, excited less notice, than it seems entitled to. A regret has been expressed, in objection to this act, that it is not accompanied by a sufficient provision, to necessitate the vigilant exertion of its various regulations. This objection has also been specifically applied to the mode of constituting the courts of protection.

On this criticism I will not pretend to decide, however strongly I may doubt its validity. Of this, however, I am confident, that the same principle which dictated the creation of those courts, affords fair ground of reliance, that no efforts will be spared so to correct them, if any correction shall be found requisite, that they shall not only afford to the negro, protection and redress, when he has the means of appealing to them, but by an active inspection of the conduct of the master and managers of estates, shall prevent their transgression of the law. If it be found necessary to add activity to the executive principle, perhaps the colonies may derive a benefit from the plan proposed by the chancellor of the exchequer for the relief of the poor. The mode fixed upon in that bill for ensuring a strict superintendence to the plan proposed, by means of certain visitors and guardians, might possibly be followed in principle, though not exactly in detail, and adapted to the situation of the islands, for the purpose of securing a more active superintendence to the system there established. That such should be the execution of the law, every proprietor resident on the island must wish: and such a strict superintendence over the conduct of those to whom the management of estates is entrusted by absentees, must be of still higher importance to every proprietor in this country.

In addition to the wise and humane regulations which the consolidated act con-

tains, I have been informed, by gentlemen who took an active part in the formation of that act, that the legislature had it in contemplation to have conferred a benefit on the negroes, more conducive to their happiness, perhaps, than any of those regulations which they did enact. That it was in their contemplation to have repealed certain laws, by which the creditor is enabled to seize the negroes on the estate, and force them to sale, for a debt either of specialty or simple contract. That after this necessary previous step, it was their wish to have attached the negroes to the soil, and to have made it impossible to separate them, without their own consent, from the estates on which they were established. It would be superfluous for me to dwell upon the advantage the negro would have derived from the execution of their intentions. I will only observe, that he might then enjoy the security that no force could tear him away from his family and his connexions; that his hut, his garden ground, and his property, might be inalienably his, and to his children for ever. During the existence of the present credit laws, that security cannot be afforded him; his *peculium* cannot be secured to him by law; he can at present only hold and bequeath it by a prescriptive right, which his master indeed is never known to infringe; but still he is liable, at any moment, to be seized by a creditor, to be separated from every connexion which is dear to him, and sold. Those who reprobate the principle of the trade, by which the African is liable to be separated from his family, his friends, and his country, will probably feel an equal horror for that law by which the negro in the colonies is made liable, with the aggravation of being in a superior degree of civilization, to be torn from ties not less strong. The defence of the slave trade is its necessity; for the continuance of this law I can see no necessity. I own it appears to me, that a numerous class of creditors, mortgagees, for instance, and all persons whose security depends on the general value of the estate, under which description I believe all the English creditors may be classed, would be materially benefited by the repeal of those laws. The value of the estate is materially diminished by the seizure of any considerable number of negroes; the security of the mortgagee is consequently lessened; and it appears to me, that this right of forcing the negroes

to sale must, in many cases, afford to one creditor the means of seizing that property, which had before been virtually pledged as security to another. If a prohibition of the slave trade had taken place, the seizure of a considerable number of negroes, whom it would then be impossible to replace, might so far affect the value of an estate, that the mortgagee might lose nearly the whole, both of his principal and interest. By what means the colonial legislature will in future afford sufficient security to creditors of all descriptions, I cannot pretend to detail; but I believe there can be very little doubt, that it will be possible to give, in future, sufficient security to creditors, and sufficient means of obtaining credit to all persons, who are in a situation to have a right to expect it, without having recourse to a pledge which has not been found necessary in this country; and I am confident, they will not be wanting in their attention to the rights of the creditors of various descriptions.

Having stated the repeal of these credit laws to be so essential to the happiness and civilization of the negroes, and consequently so advantageous to the planter; having, as I conceive, explained that it would be no less beneficial to a very numerous class of creditors, I may be asked, why, with so many inducements, the assembly of Jamaica did not repeal these laws?—It was not in their power to do so. Had they repealed them, the repeal would have been *de facto* void, because it would have been in contradiction to a clause in the 5th of George 2nd, for the more easy recovery of debts in his majesty's plantations in America. If the address I am about to propose, shall meet the approbation of the House, I should have pledged myself to appeal to them for some modification of this act; but that an hon. friend, who will do much more justice to the cause, has given me reason to believe that he will undertake it. The credit laws, as they now stand, appear to me to be an almost insuperable impediment to any considerable improvements in the happiness or civilization of the negroes. If the act of parliament, to which I have alluded, be modified, so as to leave the assemblies of the islands at liberty to carry into execution their humane intentions, I have little doubt that such a system may be established, as, with the assistance of restrictions in the trade, regulating the ages, and preventing the present dispro-

portion of the sexes in the imported negroes, shall insure an increase of internal population.

After stating what are the intentions of the legislature of Jamaica, in addition to what they have already done, it would be superfluous for me to endeavour to convince the House, that in forming or superintending such a system, that legislature will show a zeal equal to the advantages which they possess, from the opportunity of judging by immediate experience. I will not suppose the House unwilling to place, in the colonial legislatures in general, the common confidence due to common liberality and humanity. A charge, however, has been laid against the character of the planters, from whence an argument has been raised in favour of the Abolition bill, which I cannot omit shortly to notice. It has been asserted, that the planters have frequently been guilty of neglect, in some instances of cruelty, in the treatment of their negroes, because, on a calculation of interest, they have considered a supply from Africa to be more advantageous, or at least equally so, with a supply by means of attention to the internal population. If gentlemen are to consider themselves at liberty to lay aside all sentiments of candour, in arguing on the actions of the inhabitants of that country, and are to suppose them to be in no degree actuated by sentiments of humanity, but in every part of their conduct solely by immediate interest, I cannot guess from what imaginary calculations of interest they can have drawn that conclusion; but when I enter into the detail of the system of that country, and so investigate the views of interest, immediate and remote, which may be expected to operate on the minds of the planters, I find it still more difficult to discover the grounds on which such an assertion can have rested. I will answer it by a short statement of facts. It is agreed by all proprietors, that the value of a Creole negro is much more than equal to that of an African. I do not mean that he is more capable of bodily labour; his superior value arises from a superiority in intelligence, in industry, and in attachment. For estimating this difference, I know no precise scale; but by some persons the difference of value has been calculated to be very great; for instance, our mechanics, whose value is almost incalculable, are Creoles. But is this superiority of value counterbalanced by any expence,

to which the planter is subject during the childhood of the Creole negro? The expence is so trifling, that it cannot be an object of calculation, when it is considered that the children, though unfit for the laborious part of the field labour, are serviceable in a variety of ways from a very early age, and that during their infancy they must be deemed of no trifling advantage, as the causes of the superior good behaviour and industry which invariably distinguish all those negroes who have families. I can therefore confidently assert, that a Creole negro, at the age when he becomes fit for field labour, will have cost his master nothing, and that he is then intrinsically in a great proportion more valuable to him than an African negro, in the purchase of whom he must pay the profit and the expence of the African trader. It is therefore only too moderate a statement when I assert, that on balancing the account merely of self-interest, the planter, who would prefer to purchase an African slave, must reconcile himself to the voluntary loss of the whole price of that African. In addition to this immediate and self-evident interest, a new and collateral motive, but not a less powerful one, has arisen from the events which have lately taken place in that part of the world. St. Domingo is nearly become a negro colony, and the revolution lately operated in that island has made her a most dangerous neighbour. It is not far removed from probability, that the fidelity of our negroes may be put to an arduous trial; that the very existence of the colony may depend on their attachment and courage. Of the attachment of the negroes at this moment in the island, we have received a most gratifying proof in their conduct during the Maroon rebellion; but it is not possible that we should find attachment in the newly-imported Africans. In such circumstances, and with such interests, is it in nature that the African trade should be considered by us in any other light than that of a necessary evil? Can stronger motives be required, than are in our case combined, to insure an honest zeal in the execution of a plan, for the purpose of obviating the necessity of that trade.

It may be objected, first, that I have not specified any period for the completion of this plan; that I have not fixed any precise year for the termination of the slave trade. I have been guilty of this omission, because I conceive it ex-

tremely difficult for any persons whatever—impossible for any who are not accurately informed of the degree of civilization of the negroes on the various estates in any one of the Islands—to specify that year in which a plan now to be tried, shall have produced in that island, that degree of reformation which will remove the necessity of a farther importation of negroes from Africa; it is still more difficult to specify the precise years in which the work will be accomplished in each of the different islands, for in no two will the same time be required. I have already stated, that the only persons whom I can conceive to be competent to form the different regulations, fitted to the different islands, are the legislatures of those islands; from them any details may be obtained, by which it may be possible for such a precise period to be named. All that I have felt myself competent to do, has been, to explain to the House, what, in my opinion, lies within the means of the colonial legislatures to perform, and to state what are the effects which may reasonably be expected to be produced by those means; and if the House shall not think unfavourably of the practicability or efficiency of such a plan, to request the weight of their recommendation of it in general; or if they shall think more detailed evidence necessary, that they will demand it where the fullest can be obtained. While this plan shall be under trial, the House will possess at all times, the means of observing its progress, since it will be at all times in the power of any gentleman to move for the production of such part of the correspondence between the secretary of state and the governors of the different colonies, as shall relate to the subject. We shall also have to request their co-operation, by means of a modification of an act of parliament, without which it will be difficult for any efficient system of reform to be established in the colonies. It will also depend upon this House, during the time which shall be necessary for the completion of such a system, thoroughly to investigate the causes of the mortality in the middle passage; to enforce such regulations as may be calculated to remedy them, to limit the extent of the trade, and most materially to assist the colonies by such restrictions as shall regulate the ages, and prevent the disproportion between the sexes in the importation. For my own part, if the regulating bill shall be permitted to be brought

forward, I shall most readily give my assent to such clauses as shall appear best calculated to produce these effects.

The second objection which may be urged is, that the quantity of uncultivated lands in the West Indies may protract the period at which the trade will cease to be necessary. I must admit that this will be the case; but I must add, that the remedy depends on this House. The claims of the West Indians are of two sorts. The proprietors of settled estates contend, that an abrupt termination of the slave trade would, during the present decrease in the population, not only produce the ruin of their property, but involve in it the destruction of the negroes; a calamity for which no pecuniary sacrifices on the part of this country could compensate. The claim is that of the proprietors of unsettled land, and is simply a claim of indemnity. Whenever the impossibility of cultivating these lands shall take place, their value will be annihilated; and the proprietor will incur the entire loss of that purchase money which he has paid, in confidence, on the security of a system established by the British legislature. I conceive, therefore, that when parliament shall think fit to decide upon this question, if they shall consider a restriction of all farther cultivation to be a point of duty, they cannot hesitate to take into their consideration the claims of such proprietors, and to afford them an indemnification for such losses, as this change of system would impose upon them.

I shall now conclude by shortly reminding the House, that I have, in the first place, stated to them the objections which I see to the bill for the abolition of the slave trade, which I rest on a plea of justice, in the injury which it would bring upon individuals, and on a ground of policy, in a doubt, not merely on the authority of my own opinion, of its incompetency to effect a complete termination of the trade, and in the probability of the substitution of an illegal trade. That I have stated these objections as a necessary preface to the proposal of another plan, calculated to produce the smallest effect by means, as I conceive, less dangerous, and more certain; that I have stated the evil from whence the necessity of the trade arises—have thrown out some hints of the remedies which may be applied to it—have stated how far the legislature of one of the Islands, at least, has proceeded in the

work of reform—have explained the impediments which forced them to stop short—and have added my reasons for placing a confidence in their zeal for the completion of the work. I trust that, from a co-operation in a liberal and candid plan, the exertions of the two countries will not fail in effecting the object in which the House, I believe, concur unanimously, though they may differ as to the means—a complete termination of the slave trade. At least, I trust, that gentlemen will not prejudge the question; that they will not determine that nothing can be expected from the colonies, before an appeal has been made to them, from which the House will be able to judge what the colonies themselves consider to lie within their ability, and to estimate what will be the zeal with which they will exert the means which they possess. I shall therefore conclude by moving: “That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, requesting that his majesty will be graciously pleased to give directions to the governors of his majesty’s plantations in the West Indies, to recommend to the respective councils and assemblies of the said plantations, to adopt such measures as shall appear to them best calculated to obviate the causes which have hitherto impeded the natural increase of the negroes already in the Islands, gradually to diminish the necessity of the slave trade, and ultimately to lead to its complete termination; and particularly, with a view to the same effect, to employ such means as may conduce to the moral and religious improvement of the negroes, and secure to them, throughout all the British West-India Islands, the certain, immediate, and active protection of the law; and at the same time assuring his majesty, that this House will concur in such measures as shall appear requisite to be taken by this House, for the attainment of the same object.”

Mr. *Barham* rose to second the motion with very great satisfaction, because it enabled him at length to give a vote on this subject, with the perfect approbation of his own mind, and without being reduced to the distressing alternative, of either supporting a trade, the principle of which he condemned, or of voting for the abolition of it by a mode which, he was convinced, would not remove, but confirm, the evil. It was not as to his object, but as to his means, that he had always differed with the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wil-

berforce) who first brought the subject before the public; and to these means, his chief objection had always been, that they would not attain the end he had in view, but would render it more unattainable by means which, he was sure, might immediately produce a very great effect, and, as he confidently hoped, completely succeed at last. When he said that he agreed with the hon. gentleman as to his object, he took for granted that his object was really and practically to destroy the slave trade, as soon and as fully as it could be done. With those theorists who merely desired to do good upon paper, who would rather know that an ineffectual law had passed against the slave trade, than know that the trade was put in a train really to cease, and who would rather perfect their systems than promote the happiness of mankind; with these he never did, nor ever should, agree. The present motion would undoubtedly not meet their ideas. Still less could those be expected to approve of it, if there were any who still justified the principle of the trade, and who wished it in practice to flourish and increase. The support of such, he would neither desire nor deserve.

But if the question was, “by what means soonest, most effectually, and with least concomitant evil, the trade could be destroyed,” that question he was ready to meet; and it would only be necessary to compare the chance of success, afforded by the measure now proposed, with that which might be expected from persevering in the plan which had been hitherto pursued with so little advantage. His hon. friend had so clearly and so candidly submitted to the House the whole of his plan; pointing out in general the steps which, in his opinion, the colonial legislatures might adopt; not committing them, as he could not, and ought not to commit them, to specific measures which they alone were qualified to devise and competent to enforce; but, on the other hand, not doubting that, when so called on, they would do their utmost to attain the object, and, if anywhere stopt by insurmountable difficulties, would clearly point out the impossibility under which they lay of doing more at present;—his hon. friend had stated all this so much (as he perceived) to the satisfaction of the House, that he should not add one word on the subject, but proceed to state the grounds on which he asserted, that the means hitherto proposed, would completely fail to abolish

the trade. Persons unacquainted with the subject might be surprised at this assertion; but, as it depended a good deal on matters of fact, he must entreat them to consult those who, from local and professional knowledge, could inform them; and to all such he appealed whether, from a direct prohibition of the trade, any other consequence could be expected than that it would force that trade, which we now had the power to confine, to correct, and, as he hoped, at last to destroy, into channels where it would be quite out of our reach. If the trade were prohibited to our own subjects, it was certain that British capitals would immediately migrate to foreign countries, and carry it on under the protection of foreign flags. In what manner could this be prevented? Did any man expect that we could persuade every nation in the world to forego the profits of so lucrative a trade; or were we prepared, by seizing their ships, to have, at a time, too, like this, a perpetual subject of variance with foreign powers? In Africa then, and on the seas, nothing could be done to prevent the trade so carried on. To stop the landing of the slaves would be found quite as impossible. It had been asserted, that a contraband trade in slaves was more difficult to be carried on than any other contraband trade. The reverse of this was true; for it was evident, that a cargo of slaves might be landed in as many hours as it would require weeks to land any other cargo. The ships would hover round the islands, in the night they would approach, boats would put off from every creek and corner of the coast, and fetch what slaves they wanted, with whom they would soon be equally out of the reach of your ships and your custom-house. He challenged any professional man to contradict him, when he asserted, that were the whole navy of Great Britain employed for this only purpose, it could not prevent any number of slaves from being landed in the single island of Jamaica.

It was next to be considered, whether we could enforce the prohibition by a law to operate in the interior of the islands, after the slaves were landed. He said, that any interference with their internal legislation would be attended with very great difficulty. Into the question of right he should not enter. Some difference of opinion existed concerning that right on this side of the water: which way opinions leaned in the colonies, it

was easy to guess. More might be lost than gained by discussing the question; it was therefore best to leave it alone. This, however, he might safely affirm, that an act, the legality of which was against general opinion, and the execution of which was against general interest, had no chance of producing any general effect.

But then, say gentlemen, if there be such a disposition to neglect our law, we will conquer it by the severity of its clauses. If informations cannot be procured, and if magistrates in the island will not act upon it, the governors shall be enjoined to proceed on their own authority. If juries will not convict upon it in the islands, the parties shall be sent here to be tried by a jury in Middlesex; and if witnesses cannot be found to prove their guilt, they shall be charged with the *onus* of proving their own innocence. That even this would not do, he should affirm, till he was shown an instance, when, even by the hand of tyranny and force, any law had been rendered effectual against the universal will of the people where it was to operate.—But did gentlemen, in their eagerness to do good, totally forget what they were about? Was the justice of the end to sanctify the injustice of the means? Was the enormity of a crime (state it as high as you please) to authorize us to deprive men of a fair trial or to punish them before conviction? Such would be the effect of a law which was to deprive the inhabitants of the colonies of their right to a trial by a jury of the vicinage, and subject them to the verdict of men who must be unacquainted with the character of the parties and the witnesses, and the nature of various circumstances which might decide the case. Such would be the effect of a law which should expose them on the bare authority of a governor, to be sent for trial, many thousand miles from home, to the probable ruin of their affairs at any rate, and loaded with the *onus probandi* of their innocence, which, at such a distance of time and place, and considering the rapid mortality of those climates, it would most likely be impossible for them, however innocent, to procure the witnesses to prove. Could any governor accept such a task? Could any man exist under such a government? What would be the consequence of enforcing such a law, he hardly dared to contemplate, and he certainly did not dare to state; but this he knew, that there were situations in which

men would forget their attachments, would spurn at all considerations of interest or safety, and all calculations as to their chance of success, being able to feel only the wrong that is done them. If any man could not feel for others, let him bring the case home to himself, and ask what his feelings would be, if the law related to his own country, and was to subject himself and his neighbours to be sent at any time by a warrant from the lord lieutenant to prove his innocence before a jury in Jamaica.

But, perhaps it would be said, is Great Britain, then, really in this situation, that she must tolerate, and be a participator in what she feels to be a crime, and yet must do nothing to prevent it, because she cannot obtain the co-operation of her colonies, which, it will be contended, there is no chance of obtaining, if that is true which has been stated concerning the resistance that will be opposed to any prohibition of the slave trade? Neither of these inferences, however, could be fairly drawn. It neither followed that we could do nothing, because we might not do this; nor did it follow from what had been said, that the colonies would not co-operate with us if we did what was right. Let us, however, before we inquired what others would do, first look at home, and see whether we had done all that was incumbent on ourselves. How stood the case? We found a system going on in the colonies, which we condemned as contrary to justice and humanity. By whom was this system established? By the colonies? No. It was to the error and the cupidity of our common ancestors, that this system owed its origin. The colonies had here nothing distinct from us, but the merit of exercising it, in general, with very great moderation. We were now, however, desirous of abolishing this system. Should we not, then, in such a case, have said to the colonies, "The system which prevails for the purpose of cultivating your lands and maintaining your population, is inhuman and unjust; we do not impute it to you, but we who have established it in common with you, call you, in common with us, to put an end to it as soon as possible. You, who are on the spot, can best tell us how this may be effected. What depends on us to support and assist you, shall not be wanting. If the work is impeded, and your hands are tied by any laws in our statute book, tell us, and we will repeal them. If any measures should

be necessary, by which the property of individuals will be violated, we, who call on you, to make the sacrifice, do not wish ourselves to be exempted from it. Great Britain does not wish to be generous at the expence of others; nor can she think it just, even for the purposes of justice, to take away the property of individuals without offering whatever compensation can be made." Language like this would have been consistent with justice, dignity, and sound policy.

But what had been our language and our conduct? We began by charging on the colonies the system in which they were, at most, but equally guilty with ourselves. We next charged on them that guilt which was exclusively our own; imputing to them enormity which was committed in the exercise of the trade; a British trade, and carried on by British ships, British seamen, and British merchants. We had listened to and encouraged every foul and absurd calumny, against the proprietors of negroes, which ignorance, malice, or madness, had chosen to propagate; and, at last, having excited against them such a clamour, that men were almost afraid to confess that, by any chance they had become possessed of property in the islands, we then said to them: "Change your system, renounce the means by which you have hitherto subsisted, and look to us for nothing but a law which shall deprive you, in future, of every pretence by which you might rank yourselves as freemen among your fellow subjects." Could any thing be expected from such treatment but the consequence that has ensued, namely, a determined resistance to every thing that was proposed from the same quarter? Had any man a right to argue from this, what would have been their conduct, if an opposite conduct had been observed towards them? He appealed to the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce), whether it was not true, that ever since this clamour had subsided a little, ever since the voice of candour had been, in some degree, listened to, he had not found, on the part of his opponents, a proportionable willingness to accede to every measure of reasonable reform? Let, then, this be a lesson; let us tread back our steps; and then, indeed, if the colonies did not show themselves ready to concur in every practicable measure that could tend to the purposes of justice, humanity, and civilization, he would renounce their

cause, and, for one, he would be their advocate no longer. That those who made this motion expected no such thing, this motion was a pledge, which they should have disdained to make, if they thought that it could lead to nothing. It was made at the general, if not the unanimous desire of the whole West India body in the House, after many and deep consultations, in which, if any difficulty had arisen as to the mode of its execution, certainly none had been founded on any sordid or selfish consideration of interest. If it were objected, that such had not always been the language of the West India body, he must observe, that the voice of the West India body had not always been very distinctly heard in the House or elsewhere; other voices and other interests having found it convenient to mix with theirs, which had caused that the real sentiments of the West India body had often been misunderstood. — Mr. Barham concluded in these words; — I have now laid before the House my opinion on a subject which has always interested me in the highest degree, and which I have considered with much too awful a sense of what I owe to God and my fellow creatures to admit any other bias whatever. It was my original opinion, and it has been confirmed by every observation and every reflection which I have since been able to make. Let me, then, before I sit down, entreat gentlemen on the other side to pause with me for a moment. If any of them should at length, perceive that they have begun at the wrong end, and that they are pursuing a path, which has led them, and will lead them, farther and farther from their purpose, surely they will stop: surely they will prefer the real consistency of always doing what they think right, to the seeming consistency of always pursuing the same measure: surely they will prefer the real satisfaction of doing good to mankind, to the poor triumph of carrying a personal point. No, Sir; I believe too much in their sincerity, and I know too much of their noble minds, to think they would hesitate a moment in such an alternative. No; if this be the case, they will join with us; they will support our measure to effect their purpose; and you, Sir, sitting in that chair, will no longer have the pain of appointing tellers for a division, when the question is a question of humanity and justice. The only contest will be, who

shall be foremost in supporting it; and in that contest it shall go hard indeed, if we are found to be the last.

Mr. *Wilberforce* declared, that if he thought the motion would really be productive of the good which the gentlemen who supported it expected it to produce, he should be ready to give to it his assent; for no consideration of consistency of conduct should induce him to oppose a measure that was likely to produce so much good; but as he sincerely thought that, in passing such a measure as this, the House would do away its own solemn pledge, and also do much evil, it was his duty to deprecate the passing it. He reminded the House of what was likely to be thought out of doors, if it agreed to a measure that was so repugnant to its own proceedings. He then referred to what had passed in the House in 1792, when it was resolved that, within four years from that time, the African slave trade should be totally abolished. He maintained that the measure now proposed was much weaker, for the purpose of abolishing the trade, than what had been assented to in the House on the part of the planters themselves. He then referred to the resolution moved by Mr. Dundas, and adopted by the House for the gradual abolition of the trade; and by which it was determined that the trade should be abolished in a given time. By the first resolutions of the House, the trade was to have been abolished in January 1796, which was sixteen months ago. By the subsequent ones it was to be abolished in 1800. Here he read the substance of the latter resolutions, as also an address of the House to his majesty, to use his endeavours with foreign nations to pursue the plan adopted by the House; from which he argued that the House had made greater progress already in the abolition of the slave trade than this motion was calculated to produce. — As the plea of justice and humanity had been so often urged upon this subject, and urged in vain, he was afraid it was hopeless. It was idle to say that population among the negroes could not be kept up in the islands, for the contrary had been proved; and yet a greater number had already been imported than were intended to have been allowed by the last resolutions, up to the period at which the trade was intended to be abolished. He then entered into a detail of the average of the losses in some of the islands, and upon the ques-

tion of population among the negroes, for the whole of a century, in order to show that the population may be kept up without any importation. He reminded the House of the many causes that were adverted to on former occasions, as causes that would operate to increase the population of the negroes, and the willingness that was expressed on the part of the friends of the trade to try the effect of these causes, only that they should allow a little time for that purpose; and time was granted to satisfy the minds, or rather to compliment the prejudices, of the planters. When the last resolutions for the gradual abolition passed, he was congratulated on the approaching attainment of the object of his wishes. He had then said, he could not accept of that congratulation, for he foresaw that the friends of the trade had succeeded in reducing the point to a question of practical and temporary expedience, by having the trade continued. He thought they would go on with the trade from time to time without diminution; and experience had verified what he had said upon that subject. The humanity of the planters, which had been so much boasted of, had slept ever since the resolutions passed for abolishing the trade gradually; and he was afraid nothing could rouse it but an act of parliament to abolish the trade totally. Here he enumerated the horrors of the traffic, and insisted that, although gentlemen who made it a question of trade merely, might speak of it with coolness, it was a shame to the House to listen to any proposition for experiments upon that which they had declared to be inconsistent with justice and humanity, and which they had also declared ought to be abolished at a given period. He maintained that, from the present plan, it was impossible the slave trade should ever be put an end to. The legislature of Jamaica had not looked upon this trade as an evil; on the contrary, they had declared, since the passing of the resolutions of the House of Commons, that it should not be put an end to; and therefore, on the willingness of the colonial assemblies to co-operate with the wishes of the British parliament to put an end to the trade by gradual means, or by any means, he entertained his doubts. But it was said, the trade was British, and not the trade of the planters. It was a trade of which the planters and their agents had the profit, and the British parliament the guilt; and yet that parliament

was, by this motion, to ask those planters, whether that trade should be put an end to or not. He maintained that, as three-fifths of the island of Jamaica was uncultivated, the remainder was intended to be cultivated by negroes to be imported, notwithstanding it had been solemnly declared in that House, that no farther cultivation, by such means, should be attempted. However well disposed the legislature of the colonies might be to put an end to the importation of negroes, the thing would be impracticable, under the provisions proposed by the present motion. The idea of meliorating the condition of the negroes in the colonies, while importations from Africa were continued, was founded upon a dangerous error. All attempts to amend the condition of the negroes who were already in the plantations, by instruction, &c. would be in vain? Because, as men became improved in their understandings, they must naturally have some degree of freedom: it would be idle to think of giving freedom to the newly imported Africans; and it would be impossible to reconcile freedom and slavery together. If, therefore, there was any serious wish to meliorate the condition of the negroes in the West India islands the only way was, to put an end to the foreign traffic. This he maintained not only to be just and wise upon general principles, but to be also necessary for the safety of the West India islands; and he might ask the House what they thought would have been the effect at this day, if that measure had been put in force four years ago, in which time 150,000 slaves had been imported? The principles of policy, as well as of justice, were incompatible with slavery. By persisting in the system of importation, the period might soon arrive when rivers of blood would flow. He would therefore say to those who only looked to their property in the West Indies. Abolish the importation of slaves at this moment, as the first step towards the salvation of those islands. Natural causes would produce natural effects; and there was no reason for this or any other country hoping that Providence would protect it from the consequences of injustice. The laws of nature would have their effect in the moral, as well as in the physical world; and there required no profound reflection, to see what must be the event of persisting in a system of injustice. Besides, he was entitled to insist, that the House was pre-

cluded from entertaining any motion of this kind. It could not entertain it if it was faithful to itself; for it had been resolved that the slave trade should be abolished in January 1796. That period had elapsed. The House had entered into other resolutions for the abolition of the trade; and now he thought that no farther experiments to continue the trade should be tried. The last resolutions of the House were moved by his right hon. friend (Mr. Dundas). He wished to know from him, in case he supported this motion, what he would think of himself—not what the public would think of him—but what he would think of himself, if he did not adhere to the principle of such resolutions, with which the present motion was entirely at variance?

Mr. *Bryan Edwards* said:—I rise to support the motion; and I do it with infinite satisfaction, not only because I am convinced that it is calculated to promote, in a very eminent degree, the interests of humanity, but also, because the time is, I hope, at length arrived, when the planters of the British West Indies will be allowed that rank in the good opinion of mankind, which I know they have a right to claim; and to vindicate in this House their injured characters, and insulted honour. The hon. gentleman who spoke last has told you, that this was not always the language of the West India proprietors having seats in parliament. Sir, it is true, but I contend, that the voice of the planters on this subject was never fairly heard in this House. They were overborne by a torrent of misrepresentation and calumny, and compelled, by motives of self preservation, to make a common cause with the slave merchants of this kingdom, with whom I deny that their interests are essentially blended. Sir, the African slave trade, is a British trade in all respects. It is a trade carried on by British subjects, in British ships, on British capitals, and under the authority and protection of the British government. But, says the hon. gentleman, “England has the guilt, and the planters have the profit.” Sir, I contend that both the profit and the guilt center in this country. Perhaps, Sir, there are few who suspect, what is nevertheless true, that it was a British trade before we had a single colony in the West Indies, or any part of America. The government of England, in the early part of queen Elizabeth’s reign, encouraged and promoted the slave trade, and the queen

herself participated in its profits. In 1564 she sent a squadron of men of war to purchase slaves on the coast of Africa, and to convey them for sale to the Spanish West Indies. The commodore was sir John Hawkins, afterwards treasurer of the navy; and the ships were the *Solomon*, the *Tiger*, the *Swallow*, and the *Jesus*.

I have related these circumstances in our history, as introductory to the proof which I shall presently give, that, when in after-times the English nation had colonies of its own, the British government not merely encouraged, but absolutely forced, by every means in its power, the colonists to purchase African slaves (among other articles of supply) from the British merchants. James 1st, in 1618, converted the slave trade into a monopoly, by granting an exclusive charter to sir Robert Rich and others. Thus arose the first African company. Another charter was granted in 1631, by Charles 1: and in 1672 Charles 2nd, granted a third. In this last charter the king’s own brother, the duke of York, was at the head of the subscribers, who were now dignified by the title of the Royal African Company; and if the House will permit me to read the instructions which those monarchs gave to their governors in the West Indies, gentlemen will be convinced that I have proved my assertion. The first document is dated in 1671. In that year, sir Thomas Lynch was appointed governor of Jamaica: and, among other articles, in his instructions from Charles 2nd, I find the following: “You shall give all due encouragement to the trade which the Royal African Company trading unto Africa shall set on foot in our said island. You shall, as often as you have opportunity, send us an account of the number of planters, masters, servants, and slaves.” I should have observed, Sir, that nine years previous to this, soon after the Restoration, the king himself, in order to conciliate the good will of the troops in Jamaica, and to induce them to cultivate the country, had sent a supply of 300 negroes, as a royal donation, to be divided among the officers. James 2nd followed the example of his brother. In the first year of his reign he issued the following instructions to sir Phillip Howard: “You are to give all possible encouragement and invitation to merchants and others, who shall bring trade unto our said island, or any way contribute to its advantage, and particularly to the African company. And as

we are willing to recommend unto the said company that the said island may have a constant and sufficient supply of merchantable negroes at moderate rates, so you are to take care that payment be duly made in money or commodities, within a competent time, according to agreement, &c." The very same instructions *verbatim* were issued October 7th, 1689, by the glorious and immortal king William, who, not content with supplying our own colonies with African slaves, entered into a contract called the Assiento for supplying the Spaniards. And an act of the British parliament soon afterwards passed, which declares the slave trade "to be highly beneficial to this kingdom and to the plantations dependant thereon." From this period the African trade became altogether a parliamentary concern: and the resolutions in support of it, on the Journals of this House, would fill a volume. From 1729 to 1788, sums of money were voted annually for maintaining the forts on the coast to the amount of 705,255*l.* 5*s.* 10*d.*

Sir, I am aware, in transferring the guilt of the slave trade from the planters of the West Indies to its original and proper authors, of the conclusion to which my arguments lead. If the trade really be, as I shall prove it to be, solely a British trade, I shall be told, that the parliament of Great Britain must, from the nature of the case, have a right to restrain it as it sees fit, or to abolish it altogether whenever it thinks proper. Sir, I do not deny the right; it is the practicability of enforcing that right that I dispute; and this leads me more particularly to the motion of my hon. friend, which, I do admit, implies the two following propositions: 1st, That the abolition of the slave trade, by the British parliament alone, without the co-operation and concurrence of the colonial legislatures, is absolutely impossible. In other words, so long as Africa shall continue to sell her subjects, and foreign nations shall continue to carry them for sale to the West Indies, so long will the planters in the British islands (unless prevented by their own assemblies) get supplied with negroes, in spite of all the efforts of this country to prevent it. This, Sir, is my first proposition. My second is, that if the colonial legislatures are properly treated in this country, and the king shall be graciously pleased to signify his wishes in the manner proposed, the colonies are well in-

clined to concur with the British parliament in framing and enforcing such regulations as will immediately restrict, and, in due time suppress the trade altogether. These, Sir, are propositions necessarily implied in the motion of my hon. friend; and, unless I satisfy gentlemen that they are well founded, I do not expect the motion will be agreed to by the House.

Sir, in treating of the first proposition I must again remind the House, that although Great Britain may relinquish on her part, the slave trade, the other nations of Europe, and the states of America, will continue it as usual. No man pretends to say they will not. Nay, by seizing on what we surrender, they will increase their commerce with Africa, exactly in proportion as we diminish ours. I contend, therefore, that Spain, Portugal, Holland, and, above all, the states of North America, will furnish such means of illicit commerce, as no precaution, on the part of this country can obviate, nor all the force of the empire defeat.—Sir, we need only to look to the geographical situation of the colonies to be convinced of the truth of this assertion. On this point I could speak much from my own personal knowledge: but I choose rather to refer to the evidence of professional men (persons of the highest credit and character), delivered on oath before the lords. And first I will read to you the testimony of Mr. Branker, who was a commander in the African trade for nineteen years. [Here Mr. Edwards read Mr. Branker's evidence from the minutes of the House of Lords; the substance of which went to prove, that there are so many landing places in the Windward Islands, as to render it impossible for all the British navy to prevent the smuggling of negroes.] The next evidence that I shall produce is, that of admiral Philip Affleck, who commanded many years on the naval station at Jamaica, and who likewise speaks professionally. He declares, that, having had the care of the coasts of that island, he holds it to be impossible to prevent the incursions of vessels in the night from the island of Cuba. Evidence like this is incontrovertible; and I might adduce a much longer chain of information on this point; but those who remember the admirable speech of the secretary of state (Mr. Dundas) on the subject of the slave trade, in the last session of the last parliament, will not think it necessary. To those who were not so fortunate, it may be sufficient to observe;

that the right hon. secretary entered at large on this very topic; and declared from his own knowledge and experience as one of the king's ministers, that having, in the course of the preceding summer, employed no less than 28 ships of war to cut off the communications of the French with two of our sugar islands, he found himself perpetually baffled, and that the project was impracticable. He pronounced it, therefore, as a fact not to be disputed, that if the planters were desirous of a supply of slaves from Africa, it was impossible (notwithstanding all the force we could send) to prevent them from finding a landing place. "I am convinced," said the right hon. gentleman, "it is physically impossible;" and he called on any naval officer to rise up and contradict him.

Such, Sir, are the physical or natural obstacles. The moral ones are not less formidable, arising chiefly from the present temper and disposition of the inhabitants in the sugar colonies; all of whom (unless you pursue a different line of conduct towards them than you have hitherto pursued) will rise up to a man and unite their exertions to oppose you. And, Sir, what else can be expected? It is now ten years since they have been held up as objects for the finger of scorn to point at. Every falsehood which envy, ignorance, and malice, could devise to their prejudice has been levelled against them. Every species of calumny which has been fabricated for a century past has been raked together and heaped upon them: and the stale crimes and violences of Buccaneers and lawless men, in the time of Charles 2nd, have been revived and quoted, as a just representation of their present laws, manners, and dispositions.

Even the attempts which have been made in this House for an abolition of the slave trade, have been all made, not in the mildness of a temperate reform, but in the spirit of a vindictive policy. The language which has been used has always implied such notorious guilt, on the part of the planters, as to supersede the necessity of proof; and obedience to your acts of parliament has been construed into crimes of the most atrocious delinquency. Gentlemen need only read the bill, brought into this House the last session of the last parliament, to be satisfied that I advance nothing but the truth. Sir, under the first clause of that bill, a West India planter, returning to the colonies from

Great Britain, with a negro servant whom he may have brought from thence (one, perhaps, born and bred up in his family), was declared guilty of felony, and sentenced to a punishment worse than death—transportation for fourteen years to Botany Bay, among the lowest and vilest of mankind. Nay, Sir, the ship itself and all the cargo and effects on board, were declared to be forfeited on account of this enormous crime of the planter; and, by an inconsistency which is at once lamentable and ridiculous, even the poor negro (to revenge whose injuries the bill was intended) was himself made liable to be sold, for the benefit of the captors as part of the cargo!—By another clause in the same bill, the personal liberty of every inhabitant in the colonies was assigned over to the governor or commander in chief, who was authorized, on evidence which was not required to be upon oath, to seize on any man whom revenge or malice might accuse, and send him to England to be tried. The governor was even invested with the extravagant power of sending at the same time, by force, to this country all such witnesses, as either the prosecutor, or the party accused, should desire to attend. I believe the records of parliament cannot produce such another bill. No provision was made in it for the interests of tenants for life, who are bound, in many cases, by express conditions of their testators to keep up the stock of negroes: no care was taken of annuitants and lessees, under what is called in the colonies, "make-good" leases or of mortgagees residing in Great Britain; nor was compensation allowed to the planters in cases of injury. The whole was a mass of absurdity, injustice, and oppression: and I am satisfied, that if this bill had passed into a law, every man in the West Indies would have joined heart and hand in resisting it at the risk of his life.

Through the wisdom and moderation of this House, these attempts, Sir, have hitherto failed; and it is, therefore, time to try a different line of conduct. Accordingly, the planters now come forward of their own accord, and offer to the House a proposition, which, if adopted and carried into effect, will, I am persuaded, be productive of the most beneficial consequences, to the satisfaction of every man, whose aim is honestly to reform, and not to destroy. And this leads me to the second proposition, "Will the

colonial assemblies adopt the measures proposed, to be recommended to them by the crown?" Sir, as to any positive engagement on my part, or on the part of any of the planters resident in this country, concerning the future deliberations and proceedings of the colonial assemblies, it ought not surely to be expected. We certainly cannot pledge ourselves, that those assemblies will adopt any specific line of conduct recommended by us; but we contend, that it is fair and reasonable to form an opinion concerning what they will do in future, by what they have done in times past—and in similar cases, when their minds were not heated and irritated by provocation and insult. It is, I think, about thirty-five years ago that the planters in the southern provinces of North America began to take into their serious consideration, the state of the black population. The assembly of South Carolina (at that time a British colony) led the way, and passed an act to prohibit the farther importation into that country of negroes from Africa. And what was the consequence? Sir, all that humanity or philanthropy, which is now so alert and active in this kingdom, was gone a journey, or was asleep. The act no sooner came home for the royal consideration, than it was rejected; and rejected, too, with so high a hand, and so angry a tone, as if the assembly had committed rebellion or treason. The slave trade was declared, not only beneficial, but absolutely necessary to the existence of the mother country: the governor of South Carolina was severely reprimanded for having consented to the measure; and circular instructions were actually dispatched to the governors of all the other colonies, to caution them against committing the very atrocious offence which had been committed in South Carolina!

A few years afterwards, however, (in 1765,) the assembly of Jamaica fell into a similar error. Having suffered from a rebellion of the Gold-coast negroes, and conceiving that self-preservation was the first law of nature, they ordered a bill to be brought into the House for prohibiting the farther importation of all slaves from Akin, Assiantee, and Fantee. The bill was read twice, and would have passed into a law, but the governor, taking the alarm, sent for the promoters of the bill, and convinced them that he could not, consistently with his instructions, give his consent to any such measure; and it was

accordingly laid aside. In 1774, the subject was revived, and two different acts were passed by the house of assembly; by the first of which, a duty of forty shillings, in addition to the former duties, was laid upon every negro imported into that island. This not being thought sufficient to check the increasing importation, the colony took the alarm at too large an influx of aged negroes; and the assembly, in November, in the same year passed another law, imposing an additional tax of seven pounds more upon every negro imported who should have passed his thirtieth year. This act coming home for the royal confirmation, was petitioned against by the merchants of Liverpool and Bristol; and a reference being had to the board of trade, the board reported against the measure. His majesty, in council, rejected the act, in consequence of the report of the board of trade, although the agent of Jamaica presented a remonstrance against the report, stating, that "the large duties laid upon imported negroes above 30 years of age, by the act of November were laid by the house of assembly, not for the purpose of raising a revenue upon the trade of Great Britain, but solely on the principle of self-preservation, and to put an end to that enormous importation, particularly of old negroes, which, at that time, endangered the existence of the colonies." Sir, I had the honour, at the request of the agent of Jamaica, of being heard before the lords' commissioners for trade and plantations, in support of this bill. The president of the board was the earl of Dartmouth, a nobleman of distinguished humanity and piety; and to those qualities in the noble lord I made my appeal. I urged, that slavery in its best state, if at all necessary, was a necessary evil; but that it fell with dreadful aggravation on the aged and infirm; on men who were torn from their country and connexions, when their habits of life were formed, and when all the ties which render life desirable had been strengthened by time; humanity, therefore, towards the poor captives, as well as the safety of the planters, called loudly for the confirmation of the measure. All these, and various other arguments, were urged in vain: "The bill," said their lordships, "is intended to operate as a prohibition of the slave trade, to a certain extent; and we cannot allow the colonies to check, in any degree, a traffic so beneficial to the nation."

I hope, Sir, I have now satisfied the House, that the slave trade is not only, both in its origin and continuance, a British concern altogether, but also, that the present enormous extent to which it has arisen is imputable solely to the rapacity and avarice of British merchants, and the policy of this government; and that the planters are no otherwise culpable, than becoming buyers of what British acts of parliament have declared to be fair and proper objects of sale. They have never been engaged in the traffic themselves; they have sent no vessels to Africa to purchase human beings from the princes or chiefs of that devoted country; and when their legislatures have attempted, (as they have frequently done) from motives of humanity or self-preservation, to lay restrictions on the importation, their endeavours have been defeated by orders from hence. What, then, remained for the colonial assemblies to do? All that the loudest advocates of humanity could have done, under similar circumstances, has actually been effected. Defeated in their efforts to regulate and diminish the trade, they proceeded to meliorate and improve the condition of the poor negroes thus forced upon them. The assembly of Jamaica led the way; and, in the year 1781, entered seriously on the revisal and amendment of the system or code of their slave laws, reducing and consolidating the whole into one act, and introducing many humane and excellent provisions for rendering the condition of the negroes much more secure and comfortable than formerly. These provisions have been enlarged and extended by subsequent laws; the last of which is the consolidated act of 1792. The example of Jamaica was followed, in 1788, by the assembly of Dominica; and the same generous emulation soon afterwards spread to Antigua and Grenada. In each of these islands very beneficial modifications have taken place in the system of their slave government. In Grenada especially, a measure of peculiar efficacy has been adopted, by the appointment of guardians of the slaves. A regulation, nearly to the same effect, was afterwards adopted in Jamaica, by the appointment of councils of protection in each parish. Being desirous, before I left Jamaica, of ascertaining what effect this, and the other regulations, had produced in that island, I moved in the house of assembly for returns of all the trials of slaves, with the convictions and

punishments had thereon, for five years preceding. It was known that the island contained upwards of 240,000 slaves; yet, out of the whole number, it appeared that only 52 executions had taken place in all that time, or, at least, in four years and nine months—a proof of such lenity in the administration of criminal law, as I believe, is seldom equalled in the freest nations of Europe!

Sir, these are the circumstances which induce me to believe that the colonial assemblies will manifest the utmost attention and respect to the wishes of parliament, conveyed through his majesty's gracious recommendation. Their loyalty to their sovereign, and their attachment to the mother country, are eminently conspicuous; and the plan offered to their consideration combats with no preconceived opinions, violates no rights, infringes on no man's property. The means are left wholly to their own wisdom and experience. In making great changes and reforms, it is the part of wise and good men to promote the public advantage, with as little mischief as possible to individuals. In the present case the colonial assemblies, from their situation and local knowledge, and, like the hand-writing against the wall, tells them no longer to delay it. On all these grounds, Sir, I give my hearty assent to the motion.

Mr. Pitt said, that the necessity of an abolition of this abominable traffic had been recognized by that House, and entered on its Journals. There was no one who did not acknowledge that necessity, though some gentlemen differed as to the mode of carrying the object into effect. It was evident, therefore, that the trade ought to cease. The only question was, at what time it ought to cease? To come at that determination, the present motion appeared to have been brought forward. But here it was much to be lamented, that a total, partial, or even gradual abolition was not offered; but parliament was invited to acknowledge collaterally, that it would endure the continuance of the traffic without knowing how long it was to sanction the measure. He wished to consider, therefore, how far any thing new was proposed to induce the House to adopt the motion as a substitute for abolition. The first thing stated in support of it was, that it enforced provisions for increasing the population of the islands, and would thereby eventually increase the labour and the cultivation of them. Now,

many years ago it was proved that the population of the negroes in the islands was sufficient for their labour and their cultivation, except in the new settlements; and consequently unless the planters formed new settlements, the population must by this time be wholly effectual. But, it would be impossible to carry internal regulations into effect while the importation continued, and so far the motion would be nugatory. He did not discover much novelty in the discussion. One hon. gentleman, indeed, had contended, that even if a total abolition were decreed by Great Britain, a contraband trade would still subsist in the colonies. But the same sort of argument would apply to the revenue, because smuggling could not be totally suppressed. The hon. gentleman had pointed out some of the statutes of the colonies, and had compared them with reproachable statutes which remained a dead letter on our Statute book. But, to what did this tend, except to show that there was not enough done in either case? The abolition did not go to abolish a bad law which remained a dead letter on the Statute book, but to abolish a cruel and abominable practice. He decidedly objected to the motion, because he considered it to be only a substitute for that abolition, which the honour of the country, and the safety of the islands so loudly called for.

Lord *Hawkesbury* contended, that if an evil, however flagrant, had subsisted long in any country, that evil ought not to be removed at once, without due consideration of the means of effecting it. He approved of the motion, as the most temperate mode of effecting a desirable end.

Mr. *W. Smith* opposed the motion. He expressed himself with great severity against the planters, and read long extracts from the evidence which had been given in former parliaments. He quoted Mr. Edwards's History of the West Indies, to prove that slavery corrupted the morals, and debased the minds of the negroes. He rejected all evidence in favour of the planters, as being in general given by interested men. He derided the argument of expediency, and declared, that no system of commercial policy should be allowed to exist for a moment, which was repugnant to moral duty. The scheme of sending more female slaves to the islands, as a means of increasing the stock, he spoke of with the utmost horror.

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Would the House fix a premium on the enslaving of those who were the least able to resist injustice, and the least capable of enduring it? Would they promote the seizure of more wives from their husbands, more daughters from their fathers? As to the colonial laws, it would serve us in forming a judgment of them to recollect, that in Barbadoes, not many years since, the penalty on a master who should kill his slave, with circumstances of cruelty, was 15*l*. A total abolition was the only remedy for the dreadful evils, which the traders themselves had at length seen a necessity for acknowledging; and the parliament of Great Britain was alone competent to the measure.

Sir *W. Young* congratulated the House on the display of abilities shown by the hon. mover, and hoped he would be encouraged to take a frequent share in future discussions. The last Speaker had painted the horrors of inciting brother to betray brother, and parent to send a son to punishment, under the proffer of a reward. Did the hon. gentleman not know, that, in this free country, when a poor parishioner fled from his wife and children, a reward was frequently advertised by overseers, and which might eventually be given to a brother informing against a brother? Was not this the case on desertion from every regiment? His hon. friend (Mr. Edwards), had quoted an old act from the English Statute book, that directed a vagrant beggar to be seized and made a slave of, and even directed ignominious brands and mutilation. This was objected to as irrelevant. It was no such thing: it was by analogy, a fair ground of inference, looking to the practice of society in both countries; it implied, that you were not to judge of the conduct of men from the dead letter of the law; that you should no more estimate the manners of your fellow-subjects in the colonies, from the act of Barbadoes, than the manners of your fellow-subjects at home from the severities enacted by the act of king Edward. Get the best information, and decide the character of a people, by their manners, not by laws, obsolete in themselves; and, as obsolete, no longer theirs. The laws remained in the Statute book; but they no longer delineated the temper of the people.—It was stated, that slavery bred slavish principles; fraud, deceit, servility, and adulation. He felt the theory to be

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just, if slavery was carried to the extreme; but, in a voyage, which, for the first time in his life, he had made to the West Indies in 1771, looking with an anxious eye to the condition of the negroes, he found that, speaking generally, slavery was not, and could not be carried to such an extreme; that the many could not be controlled by the few, for any length of time, but by just and temperate conduct in the exercise of power. The terms slavery and freedom, were not to be urged but with great qualification, by those experienced in history, and in practice too. Conversant as he was in a subject, which, for years, had engaged his attention, he meant the condition of the poor of this free country, he could not call them free, under the workhouse establishment. It was a tender subject, and he would not dwell upon it; but the property of a negro, and his person too, he would say, were generally as secure in the West Indies, as those of the paupers in this or any country in Europe; and with the name of slavery they enjoyed as much freedom. But while slavery and slavish principles are thus charged on the colonists, where is the feeling for educated Englishmen? Look to the means suggested for the direct abolition of the slave trade, by a proposed act of this country, in the last session. After seven years' consideration of the best means of abolition, what were the means then devised? They were such as he should have felt himself bound to have opposed with his life. Those Whigs, those reformers, those friends of liberty who devised the slave bill of last year, would have sacrificed every principle of freedom and of the British constitution. They would have annihilated the Habeas Corpus act; have taken away all liberty of the subject, if unhappily he was a West Indian subject; and at the same time haughtily trampled on all the privileges and rights of the legislatures of the colonies; sacred as the rights of this House within the pale of the British empire. Did the hon. gentleman so estimate the colonists, as to suppose they would be easily subdued to slavish principles, in thus enacting their slavery; and that haughty command on the part of this country would suddenly, on their part, produce servile acquiescence? He denied the inference. The great promoter of abolition in this House had talked of parliament being pledged to the direct measure of abolition: surely, his hon.

friend too well knew the constitution of parliament to persist in such reasoning. The great points at issue in the question of abolition, had been wholly slurred over by the opponents to the motion, namely, expediency and practicability. An hon. gentleman (Mr. W. Smith) would not allow the argument of expediency in a moral question: if the hon. gentleman meant to set up as a teacher, he should go to school for his ethics. As for his politics, the school of christian morality, or any morality, never told him to force men, but to induce them: never to drive, but to guide to the right way; and to do this, the just and true moralist will temporize with the weaknesses of his fellow-creatures, though he will be no partner in their frailties, much less in their crimes or their vices. He will work by degrees, because his benevolence so tends, his wisdom so directs, and his object can only be so obtained. Were the question of practicability at issue, for the use of those not accustomed to consider the subject in that point of view, he would so far expatiate on the evidence of governors and naval officers, as, in geographical detail, to observe, that in the West Indies the trade winds blew constantly from east to west; that generally speaking, the shipping first resorted in each island to ports to the leeward, and, in consequence, that in the first settlement, the towns were built on such parts of the coasts as were best suited to mercantile intercourse with the shipping; that the custom-houses were built on like principles of convenience and contiguity, and that neither custom-house officers could perpetually look out to windward, nor custom-house boats constantly keep a station there, and thus, that negroes might be clandestinely imported to windward in each island, if the inhabitants were so agreed. In ordinary articles of convenience or commerce, the security of the customs claimed the attention of the colonial magistrates; but, in this case, could much be expected from them?—their private characters vilified—their public rights, as members of the colonial assemblies, broken as playthings by their mother country—could they acquiesce in such despotism? No; be assured not. Look, then, to the alternative—preserve the just and constitutional exercise of their private, magisterial, and legislative rights and powers, and confidently trust to their pursuing the object you point out to them. You have an earnest

of the honourable conduct you are to expect from them in the general conduct of West Indians elected to this House, who now come forward of their own free motion, to second the best views of humanity, in the only proper and feasible way. In looking to the words of the motion, to the temper, the candour, the earnestness on every topic of benevolence which the hon. mover had shown, and observing, that no gentleman had a larger tract of land uncultivated, and which his own motion went to prevent the cultivation of; he hoped the House would be induced to entertain a just confidence in the West Indian character, of which they had so good a sample before them. For himself, he had argued the question earnestly, as being of the utmost moment; for he felt that the point at issue involved many important considerations, as whether the West India islands were to enjoy an efficient legislature, and whether repeated discussions were, as menaced, to take place in the British parliament; all which must ultimately tend to excite revolt among the negroes, and alienate every description of people in our colonies. On every principle of humanity to the negroes; on every principle of regard to the peace and safety of the colonies in particular, and of the empire in general; he was, on these accounts, for transferring the subject from idle or mischievous debate in this House, to where it could be argued with utility, with knowledge and experience, and be given its full effect without danger; and where each stage of progress would be an actual attainment of benevolent purposes, in the amended morals and social happiness of the negroes, tending to the natural increase of those people, and rendering the trade to Africa, from year to year, less necessary, until it should finally cease, and expire without a struggle.

Lord *Carysfort* spoke against the motion, and expressed his desire for a total abolition.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* thought he should act badly if he did not countenance the motion. Without the consent of the colonial assemblies, he considered any attempt at abolition to be idle and nugatory. The motion afforded him an opportunity of agreeing to a final abolition, through the medium of a prudent and preliminary regulation. The motion appeared to him to be a wise and salutary regulation, and, as such, it should have his hearty approbation.

Mr. *Ryder* was for an immediate and total abolition. He moved an amendment to the motion, to leave out the words, "gradually to diminish the necessity of the slave trade, and ultimately to lead to its complete termination," because this was insinuating that this proposition was to be a substitute for the other, and therefore he could not agree to it. There were other words which he wished to be left out, but even in this state he could not vote for the motion.

Mr. *Fox* considered the motion to be an indirect attempt to perpetuate the slave trade. The support given to it by Mr. *Dundas*, was a sufficient proof to him of its object, as that gentleman had always opposed the abolition. He hoped the present parliament would not be like the last, which on this subject had exposed itself to the contempt of the country. In 1791 it had voted against the abolition. In 1792 awed, as it ought to be, by the petitions of the people, it had voted for the abolition; but it never had fulfilled its resolution. It was said that France would carry on the trade if we dropped it. He thought otherwise; but whether they did or did not, that was no argument to this country. He did not like to trust to the colonial assemblies. Let laws be made abolishing the slave trade, and there was no doubt they would be obeyed. He did not think the House bound by former resolutions in favour of the trade. If the House had resolved to sell themselves to the devil, they should alter such resolutions.

Mr. *Windham* was in favour of the motion, as it was calculated to abolish the slave trade by such regulations as had formerly been recommended by Mr. *Burke*, his right honourable friend.

The amendment was negatived. The original motion being put, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Charles Rose Ellis	- {	99
		Mr. Foster Barham		
NOES	{	Mr. Ryder	- {	63
		Mr. William Smith		

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

Copies of all Communications between the Directors of the Bank and Mr. Pitt, respecting Advances to Government.] April 7. Mr. Best, from the Bank of England, presented to the House, pursuant to order, the following papers: viz.

COPIES OF ALL COMMUNICATIONS between the Directors of the Bank and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, respecting Advances to Government since Nov. 1, 1794.

(No. 1.)—Resolution of the Court of Directors, the 15th of January, 1795.

Resolved; That the governor and deputy governor do take an early opportunity of informing the chancellor of the exchequer, that the court of directors, desirous at all times to give every assistance and accommodation to the public service, think it proper at the present period, when a loan, under the guarantee of this country, for a foreign state, of the large amount of six millions sterling, and also one for our own national wants of eighteen millions sterling, are about to be raised, to bring to his consideration, that it is their wish that he would settle his arrangements of finances for the present year in such a manner as not to depend on any farther assistance from them beyond what is already agreed for; and particularly, that the stipulation for the future advances to be made by them, if necessary, for payment of treasury bills of exchange, be strictly adhered to, as they cannot allow that advance at any time to exceed the sum of five hundred thousand pounds.

(No. 2.)—In the Court of Directors, on the 16th of April, 1795.

The governor and deputy governor were directed by the court to wait upon the chancellor of the exchequer, and to mention to him the uneasiness which they have felt on being left, during so long a period, in an advance of one and a half, to upwards of two millions of money, for the bills accepted by the Treasury. That this mode of paying the treasury bills in advance was never meant to be carried to any great extent, at the most to 500,000*l.*, and that only as a temporary accommodation.

The chancellor of the exchequer did promise to the governor and deputy governor in December last, and particularly in a conversation on the 17th of January, that the amount of these bills paid at the Bank, then exceeding the sum of 500,000*l.* should certainly be paid off after the receipt of the first payment on the new loan; which promise hath not yet taken place. The court have therefore come to a resolution, that they cannot in future allow of any disburse on this account, exceeding the sum of 500,000*l.*; and they do request, that the chancellor of the exchequer will be pleased to order the same to be paid.

(No. 3.)—Note from the Governor and Deputy Governor, to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Bank, 5th June, 1795.

The governor and deputy governor of the Bank present their respectful compliments to Mr. Pitt; and take the liberty of stating to

him, that though he was pleased to promise, the last time they had the honour of an interview, that the amount of the treasury bills paid by the Bank should immediately be reduced to the sum of 500,000*l.* (beyond which sum, by a resolution of the court, it was not to pass); the Bank are now in advance on that account, 1,210,015*l.* 17*s.* 5*d.*, and before the end of next week it will be increased to 1,658,467*l.* They at the same time beg to express their concern at being so repeatedly obliged to trouble him on the subject; hoping he will give such directions as may in future prevent it.

(No. 4.)—Resolution of the Court of Directors, 30th of July, 1795.)

Resolved; That the governor and deputy governor of the Bank be desired to inform the chancellor of the exchequer, that it is the request of this court that he will either adopt some other mode of paying the treasury bills of exchange, than by directing them for payment at the Bank, or so to arrange the furnishing of money for the payment of these bills, that the amount for which the Bank should be in advance, shall not at any time exceed the sum of 500,000*l.*, as this court is determined to give orders to the cashiers, to refuse payment of all bills whenever the advance shall amount to such sum of 500,000*l.* That previously the court is desirous of fixing on a certain day with Mr. Pitt, when such order shall take place; but in the mean time depend on his former and repeated promise to reduce the present advance as speedily as possible.

(No. 5.)—Report of the Governor, and Resolution of the Court of Directors, 6th of August, 1795.

The governor having laid before the court a letter from the chancellor of the exchequer, which was received yesterday at four o'clock in the afternoon, containing a request for a farther accommodation on the credit of the growing surplus of the consolidated fund;

Resolved, That the consideration of this letter be postponed; and that the governor and deputy governor be desired to wait on Mr. Pitt, and inform him, that this court cannot take his letter into consideration until it has received satisfaction respecting the repayment of the monies already advanced for payment of treasury bills of exchange, to reduce that account under the stipulated sum of 500,000*l.* above which the Bank was never to be in advance; and until it has had sufficient security held out that it shall not be called upon to make farther advances on this account in future: and that they do request Mr. Pitt to enter into full explanations on this subject, which is not even touched upon in his letter.

Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 7th of August, 1797.

The governor and deputy governor this day

waited on Mr. Pitt at the hour he had appointed:—When the governor first observed to him, that his letter did not arrive in time to be taken into consideration by the committee on Wednesday; and that it was therefore of necessity laid before the court on Thursday, without much previous consultation on it in the committee:—and the governor then read to Mr. Pitt the following note, as containing the substance of what passed upon it in the court:

The governor having laid before the court a letter received yesterday afternoon from the chancellor of the exchequer, containing a request for a farther accommodation of two millions and an half, on the growing produce of the consolidated fund;

Resolved, That the consideration of this letter be postponed; and that the governor and deputy governor be desired to wait on Mr. Pitt, and inform him, that this court cannot fully take his letter into consideration until he has finally settled the arrangement, notified to him last week, relative to the reduction of the amount of the treasury bills paid by the Bank, so that the sum advanced may never exceed 500,000*l.*; of which his letter makes not the least mention.

(No. 6.)—Letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Resolutions of the Court of Directors, 13th of August, 1795.

Downing Street, 12th August, 1795.

Gentlemen;—I have to request the favour of you to state to your court, that if they think proper to afford the accommodation which I have requested in my letter of the 5th instant, by taking exchequer bills payable out of the growing produce of the consolidated fund, they may depend upon measures being immediately taken for the payment of one million of the sum they have advanced for the payment of bills; and farther payments to the amount in the whole of another million may be made in the course of September, October, and November, in such proportions as may be found convenient. But as fresh bills may be expected to arrive, I am under the necessity of requesting that a latitude should be allowed for the payment of such bills to an amount not exceeding one million; in addition for which sum, payment shall be provided before the end of February, or, if the court materially prefer it, of January. In order to guard against any fresh disappointment, I beg leave to suggest, that it may be useful, if from time to time you send me notice whenever the amount advanced comes within fifty thousand pounds of the limit fixed, that warrants may be prepared without delay. I am, &c.

(Signed)

WM. PITT.

In the court held this day, after reading Mr. Pitt's letter of the 12th of August, it was resolved, That this court do not accede to the proposal contained in the said letter. It was farther resolved, That the court do consent

to Mr. Pitt's request, in his letter of the 5th instant; namely, to advance two millions five hundred thousand pounds on exchequer bills, on the security of the surplus of the consolidated fund, to be repaid as follows: About eleven hundred thousand pounds from the produce of the quarter ending the 10th of October next; and for the remainder they are willing to wait till the ending of the quarter of the 5th of April, 1796. And that the governor and deputy governor be desired to inform Mr. Pitt, that the court still adhere to their former resolution, of insisting that the credit on the treasury bills be restrained to 500,000*l.*; but that the court will wait for the re-payment of one million of the money already advanced beyond the said sum of 500,000*l.* until the latter end of November (if it is of essential service to the government of the country that it should do so) provided positive assurance is given by the chancellor of the exchequer, that this additional million shall punctually be repaid at that time; and that in no case, if this proposition is acceded to, the Bank is to be in advance beyond one million and a half for payment of the treasury bills, which by the end of November are to be reduced to 500,000*l.*

The court also request, that the governor and deputy governor will express to Mr. Pitt, the earnest desire they have, that some other means may be adopted, in the next session of parliament, for the future payment of bills of exchange drawn on the Treasury. When the last resolution was proposed, Mr. Winthrop moved the following amendment, and was seconded by Mr. Simeon, to be added, after the words "consolidated fund," and to leave out all the remainder; "Provided at least two millions of the same shall be applied to the discharge of the sum for which the Bank is now in advance, on account of bills accepted by the Treasury; it being the intention of this court to restrain the amount of such advance to the sum of 500,000*l.* agreeably to their former resolutions." The said amendment being put to the vote, was negatived; and the resolution, as first moved, was carried in the affirmative.

August 14th, 1795.

The governor and deputy governor, in compliance with the desire of the court held yesterday, waited this day on the chancellor of the exchequer, to signify to him, that his letter of the 12th instant had been duly considered; and it was resolved, that the proposals which it contained could not be acceded to; and to communicate to him the farther resolution of the court respecting his request in his letter of the 5th instant, as minuted in this book yesterday. The governor put into his hands a copy of the two resolutions, which Mr. Pitt read attentively; and returned soon after with a letter, written by himself, at the request of the governor and deputy go-

vernor, signifying his acquiescence in the said resolution, and promising punctually to comply with the conditions stipulated therein.

Downing-street, 14th August, 1795.

Gentlemen;—I have to request the favour of you to inform your court, that I agree to the conditions specified in their resolution of yesterday (see the note of the 13th of August), for the advance of two millions and a half on the credit of the consolidated fund; and will take care that they shall be punctually complied with. I return the paper containing the resolution; and am, gentlemen, &c.

(Signed) WM. PITT.

(No. 7.)—Copy of a written Paper delivered to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Bank of England, 8th October, 1795.

The very large and continued drain of bullion and specie which the Bank has lately experienced, arising from the effects of the loan to the Emperor, and other subsidies, together with the prospect of the demand for gold not appearing likely soon to cease, has excited such apprehensions in the court of directors, that, on the most serious deliberation, they deem it right to communicate to the chancellor of the exchequer, the absolute necessity they conceive to exist for diminishing the sum of their present advances to government—the last having been granted with extreme reluctance on their part, on his pressing solicitations and statement, that serious embarrassments would arise to the public service, if the Bank refused.

It must occur to Mr. Pitt's recollection, that last January the governor and deputy governor of the Bank did, by instructions from their court, formally announce to him their apprehensions of the consequences that were likely to ensue from the Emperor's loan taking place; the events seem fully to justify their fears, and to render every measure of caution absolutely necessary for their future safety.

In addition to the above causes, it may be proper to state, that large sums are likely soon to be called for by the claimants of the cargoes and freights of the neutral ships taken, and about to be reimbursed; many of whom, as they are credibly informed, are instructed by their owners and proprietors to take back their returns in specie or bullion.

The present price of gold being from 4*l.* 3*s.* to 4*l.* 4*s.* per ounce, and our guineas being to be purchased at 3*l.* 17*s.* 10½*d.*, clearly demonstrates the grounds of our fears; it being only necessary to state those facts to the chancellor of the exchequer.

Ever ready as the court of directors have been to accommodate and give their assistance in the service of the public, they must now express their hopes, that Mr. Pitt will, on the meeting of parliament, so arrange his plans of finance, as not to depend upon the

immediate advance of the duties on land and malt 1796; and that he will be pleased to provide the means of reimbursement to the Bank, conformably to his agreement, of the million on account of the treasury bills, and the one million one hundred thousand, part of the advance on the product of the consolidated fund, in case it shall not have been previously paid, and also to reimburse the remaining 1,400,000*l.* on the same product in January or February, instead of April.

(No. 8.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 23rd of October, 1795.

The governor mentioned his having heard that there might be annexed to the ensuing loan, one of 1,400,000*l.* for the emperor of Germany; and stated, that in such a case it would be highly proper for the Bank to have some intimation of it, that they might adopt such arrangements as the measure would render absolutely necessary;—the chancellor of the exchequer replied, That he had not at present the most distant idea of it; though he did not pledge himself that on no occasion such a thing might happen. The governor thanked him for his answer, which he told Mr. Pitt he received with pleasure, thinking, as he did, that another loan of that sort would go nigh to ruin the country. The governor also acquainted him, that the drain of cash continued; and was likely to do so, while the bills from abroad continued to be drawn on the Treasury. Mr. Pitt said, they might last two months longer, but he believed not longer.

(No. 9.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 18th of November, 1795.

The governor informed Mr. Pitt, that the present price of gold was 4*l.* 2*s.* per ounce, and that the daily large drains of specie from the Bank filled the minds of the directors with serious apprehensions; and that in the present situation of their affairs, he must not rely on any aids from them, not even the vote of credit and supply bills.

The chancellor of the exchequer apologized for the warrants that were designed to be applied to the reduction of the amount of the treasury bills paid by the Bank, having, from the most urgent necessity, been otherwise applied to the payment of the troops going abroad. With respect to the million which he had promised should be paid in the course of this month in farther reduction of the treasury bills, he said his intention was to take out that sum in part of the land and malt for 1796, and to pay it on this account, having no other means to do it by. The governor then hinted to Mr. Pitt, his apprehensions from a rumour that a farther loan to the Emperor was in agitation, notwithstanding the assurances which Mr. Pitt gave him some time back, that he had not then the most distant idea of such a measure. The chancellor replied, That he then had not such a thought

from the tardy and slow operations of the Austrians; but the face of things having since changed, and the Austrian army having been of late very active and successful, he confessed it was his opinion that a continuance of such exertions was the surest way of distressing the French, and bringing them to proper terms of peace; and on this ground ministry now had it in contemplation to let the Emperor have another loan, not exceeding two millions, trusting that it might be done with safety, and on the consideration that the subsidies of about 900,000*l.* per annum, which had been paid to different states in Germany, for troops, would cease; and also the bills drawn for the support of our army on the continent, which had last year amounted to near three millions sterling: beside, that should the loan take place, he had no objection to modify the stated times for the remittance thereof, so as to cause the least bad effect on the course of exchange. And he farther added, That should the situation of the Bank be such, as to make this measure a very hazardous one, he would, in compliance with our request, overlook every other consideration and abandon the loan. The governor and deputy governor then told Mr. Pitt, that they would take the sense of their court to-morrow on the advances, which he wished to have on the land and malt of 1796, and wait upon him with the determination of the court as soon as it should break up.

(No. 10.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 20th of November, 1795.

The court of directors having, on a consideration of the advances proposed by the chancellor of the exchequer on the land and malt, 1796, resolved to let him have the sum of one million, under the restriction that it be immediately applied to the discharge of so much of the Bank's advance on the treasury bills: and also a farther advance of 500,000*l.* for his present accommodation:—The governor and deputy governor went, as soon as the court was over, to wait on the chancellor of the exchequer to acquaint him thereof. But at the same time the governor mentioned to him, that it was the expectation of the court, that he should not take up any more on this fund until about February next, and then gradually, as the advance on the former year would be coming in. The governor also said, that from the present situation of matters at the Bank, and from appearances for the future, it would be absolutely out of the power of the court to make the advance, which had been done before, of 2,500,000*l.* on the vote of credit which might be passed this session; and he felt it right to announce this in time to Mr. Pitt, before the loan, that he might make his arrangements accordingly:—Which Mr. Pitt thanked him for having mentioned; said he supposed he might venture to issue about 1,500,000*l.* of such exchequer bills to the public; and that he must

provide for the other million by an addition to the loan. The governor then repeated to Mr. Pitt, the absolute determination of the court to have the advance on the treasury bills quite cleared off, by an early payment out of the monies received in part of the loan.

(No. 11.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 12th of December, 1795.

In consequence of a message from the chancellor of the exchequer, the governor and deputy governor waited upon him this day; when he returned to them the paper, which contained the copy of the court's resolution made on the 3d instant.

The governor renewed the subject of the payment of the treasury bills to Mr. Pitt, which amount now to 2,670,000*l.*; but Mr. Pitt said, the money hitherto received on account of the present loan, should be applied to the payment thereof, and a farther sum out of the payments in full, until that advance was reduced to 500,000*l.*

(No. 12.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 8th of January, 1796.

The governor and deputy governor this day waited on the chancellor of the exchequer, by his desire. When he mentioned to them his request that the Bank would accommodate him with an advance of 500,000*l.* which he wanted for the purpose of paying off sums due to the army agents, and for which he would pledge exchequer bills on the land and malt of the present year; and if the payments made upon the loan for this year should amount in all before the end of this month to above 5,800,000*l.* the excess beyond that sum, as far as 500,000*l.* should be employed in re-paying the Bank's advance on the exchequer bills on the credit of the growing produce of the consolidated fund for the service of the last year. The governor told Mr. Pitt, that he did not think the court would object to such an advance, and desired him to write an official letter in time to be laid before the next court for that purpose. Mr. Pitt said, he had an immediate necessity for 200,000*l.*: which the governor said he might take up directly; not doubting that it would be approved of by the court of directors.

(No. 13.)—The Governor's Report, and Resolution of the Court of Directors, 28th of January, 1796.

The governor having informed the court, that a notice was brought this morning from the Treasury, that certain bills drawn on the commissioners of the Treasury, amounting to the sum of 201,000*l.* would fall due on Wednesday the 3d of February, and were directed for payment at the Bank; and that the sum now in advance on treasury bills is 1,157,000*l.*;

Resolved unanimously, That the governor do give directions to the cashiers not to advance any money, for the payment of these

bills, nor to discharge any part of the same, unless money shall be sent down for the purpose; in which case such money is to be appropriated exclusively for the discharge of these bills.

Resolved, That the governor, deputy governor, and a deputation from this court, do wait on the chancellor of the exchequer, with a copy of the above resolution; and do farther respectfully lay before him, the determination of the court, not to continue any longer the mode of advancing the payment of treasury bills, than to such time as shall be fixed on between Mr. Pitt and the deputation before-mentioned, which time the court hopes will not be fixed for a distant day.

(No. 14.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 29th of January, 1796.

The governor and deputy governor, with Mr. Peters and Mr. Bosanquet, waited on Mr. Pitt this day with the resolution of the court, as stated in the foregoing minute. He dwelt much on the inconvenience which it would put him to, to comply with it; but after some conversation, said he would arrange his affairs, so as to provide the money in time for the payment of the treasury bills due on the 3d of February, by applying to that purpose money which he had destined for other services.

As to fixing a period when the payment of the treasury bills shall no longer be referred to the Bank, Mr. Pitt declared himself unable to settle that at such a short notice; but that he would look into the situation of his payments, and endeavour to form such a plan as soon as possible; and hoped to be able to conclude it by Friday the 5th of February, when he would expect to see the deputation again.

(No. 15.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 5th of February, 1796.

The governor, deputy governor, Mr. Peters, and Mr. Bosanquet, this day waited upon Mr. Pitt again, according to appointment, to hear his determination about the latter part of the court's resolution, on the 28th ultimo, as to fixing a time when the present mode of paying the treasury bills in advance should be brought to a period. Mr. Pitt, after much conversation on the subject, said, That measures were now taking for a payment of 500,000*l.* more on this account, to the Bank, which would reduce their advance on this score to under 200,000*l.*; but that as matters were situated, he could not foresee a possibility of paying the remainder, and quite finishing the account, till May or June next; for that as some part of our cavalry had not been brought home from Germany, there must still be some monies drawn for their charges, but he did not think it could amount to above 300,000*l.* more in the whole. Mr. Pitt, however, said, he would digest his ideas on this subject more particularly, and send a letter

with a proposal to the Bank court against next Thursday.—Mr. Pitt dwelt much on the necessity of some farther support to be given to the Emperor, to enable him to continue his efforts against the French, as the most probable means of bringing the war to an end; but knowing the sentiments of the directors of the Bank to be against any such assistance in money, he promised that he would not commit himself to any engagement for a farther loan to the Emperor, without a previous communication on the subject with the gentlemen of the Bank.—Mr. Pitt read some extracts of letters from the British resident and others at Hamburgh, which mentioned that large quantities of English guineas were imported thither by the packets from Yarmouth; and one mentioned that the guineas were melted down on arrival there, Mr. Pitt said, that attention should be paid to this circumstance at the ports from which the packets sailed.

(No. 16.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 12th of February, 1796.

The governor told Mr. Pitt, that the court had received his letter of the 11th instant, and would comply with his desire of continuing to pay the treasury bills as usual till May, when he hoped it would be totally done away; and that he might look to a temporary accommodation of 500,000*l.* in the interval; but absolutely required, that it should never exceed that sum.

Mr. Pitt said, that as far as lay in his power, it should not exceed it; but that demands did arise occasionally which he could not foresee, but which the public service required to be provided for; and if the money from the loan did not flow in fast enough, he might be obliged to have recourse for temporary assistance to the Bank; and that it lay with the court of directors to judge whether they chose to accommodate the public or not.

(No. 17.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 11th of April, 1796.

The governor and deputy governor this day waited on the chancellor of the exchequer at his desire; when he informed them, that he meant to propose in parliament a farther loan of about six millions and a half, in order to fund the four millions of exchequer bills, which the Bank holds on the supply and vote of credit of 1795; two millions of exchequer bills which have issued to the public, and about half a million, the amount of navy bills held by the Bank, due in the months when he means to fund them, but which the governor had informed Mr. Pitt that the Bank chose to have the payment of. Mr. Pitt said, he hoped to be able to bring this matter before the House on Monday next the 18th instant; and would desire the governor and deputy governor to come on some day this week, to a previous meeting with

the parties who were to be concerned in this business.

(No. 18.)—The Governor's Report, and Resolution of the Court of Directors, 19th of May, 1796.

The governor having informed the court, that the present advance on treasury bills of exchange is 835,000*l.* beyond which there is a notice now lying in the House of a farther sum of about 200,000*l.* which will shortly become due; and that a notice was brought on Monday last from the Treasury, containing a list of bills drawn on the commissioners to the sum of 900,000*l.* more, of which the principal part would fall due on the 29th instant, which were directed for payment at the Bank: the court resolved, that a representation in writing should be made to the chancellor of the exchequer on the subject.

(No. 19.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 24th of May, 1796.

In consequence of an appointment from the chancellor of the exchequer, the governor and deputy governor waited upon him this day, with a view to lay before him the resolution entered into by the court on the 19th instant; but they found him so impressed with the necessity of providing the funds to pay off the treasury bills for 900,000*l.* and that he had formed his plan for the liquidation thereof, that they thought it prudent to withhold the resolution from him.—Mr. Pitt explained his measure in the following letter to the governor and deputy governor, which he wrote while they were with him, viz.

Downing-street, May 25, 1796.

Gentlemen;—I beg leave to acquaint you, for the information of your court, that a warrant is directed for the issue of 900,000*l.* for the payment of the bills to become due to that amount in the course of the present week. I must at the same time desire you to request of the court, in consequence of the pressure arising from this unexpected payment, that they will accommodate government by advancing a sum of 200,000*l.* to the account of the paymaster general, to be repaid out of the cash to be received on the next payment of the loan of 7,500,000*l.* I have, &c.

(Signed) Wm. Pitt.

The governor afterwards mentioned in conversation the desire of the court to have the new arrangements made which should ease the Bank from the payment of the treasury bills. The promise to which point Mr. Pitt acknowledged to have made; but being excessively hurried with a variety of business, and about to set off to attend the election at Cambridge, he desired leave to defer this object, until some time next week, after his return, when he would resume it.

(No. 20.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 14th of June, 1796.

The governor and deputy governor this day
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waited on Mr. Pitt with a statement of the treasury bills paid by the Bank, which amount now to the sum of 1,002,555 6 4
and of bills already advised,
but not yet due 230,093 16 1

£.1,232,649 2 5

and requested that speedy measures might be taken to pay off the same.—Mr. Pitt told them, that he had made arrangements to pay off the 200,000*l.* which he had borrowed (as by his letter of the 25th of May, copied in the private minute book of the court), and also for the payment of 800,000*l.* out of the monies received on the last loan, for which he would take up exchequer bills to that amount on the vote of credit of 1795; and in consequence of these payments he hoped the Bank would have patience to wait for the discharge of the advance on the treasury bills above-mentioned until the quarter ending the 5th of July, of the consolidated fund, when the surplus thereof should be applied to that purpose.—Which the governor said he should refer to the court for their opinion.

(No. 21.)—LETTER from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Resolution of the Court of Directors, 21st of July, 1796.

Downing-street, Wednesday, July 20, 1796.

Gentlemen;—As the pressure of demands for the public service, at the present moment, prevents the payment in cash of the sum advanced by the Bank on treasury bills, I should consider it as a great accommodation if the court would accept of exchequer bills on the vote of credit, to the amount of the sum now due beyond five hundred thousand pounds. I would also beg the favour of you to propose to the court, in order to guard against any farther excess on that point, that any farther sums to be advanced for treasury bills should be paid in exchequer bills, on the credit of the consolidated fund, at the end of each month. I am also under the indispensable necessity of expressing my earnest hope, that the court will be induced to make a present advance of eight hundred thousand pounds, on the credit of the consolidated fund, which will enable me to make provision for the present demands, and to pay immediately the four hundred thousand pounds lately advanced by the Bank, and the navy bills now due. I shall also be obliged to request a farther advance of the like sum of eight hundred thousand pounds, on the same security, towards the end of the month of August. It gives me much concern to be obliged to apply for an accommodation to so large an extent; but I cannot too strongly represent how necessary it is for the public service: and I trust the very large repayments which are secured to the Bank in the course of the present year, will admit of their making these temporary advances at a period when they are peculiarly important.—I have, &c.

(Signed) Wm. Pitt.

[X]

P. S. In case the Bank should find it necessary (which I hope will not be the case) to dispose of any of the exchequer bills on the vote of credit, before provision is made for their discharge, and any loss should arise from their being at a discount in the market, I should of course propose that such a loss should be made good by the public.

After a debate on the subject of this letter, the court came to the following resolution thereon:

Resolved, That this court do consent to receive payment for the amount of advances on the treasury bills which have been and shall be paid before the first of August, beyond the sum of 500,000*l.*, and which will be 867,700*l.* in exchequer bills issued on the vote of credit of the present year, under the stipulation of indemnity from loss on the sale proposed by Mr. Pitt, and to wave their claim of re-payment of the 500,000*l.* till the meeting of parliament; when the court will expect that this mode of paying treasury bills shall be totally done away.

Resolved, That the court do not consent to advance any more money for the payment of such bills which fall due after the first of August.

Resolved, That the court do consent to the other part of the letter, to advance the sum of 800,000*l.* on the credit of exchequer bills on the consolidated fund, on condition of being paid off the 400,000*l.* lately advanced to government, and the navy bills due and coming due; but they do not consent to advance the second sum of 800,000*l.* in the month of August.

The governor, deputy governor, with Mr. Darell, and Mr. Samuel Thornton, were desired by the court to carry up these resolutions to the chancellor of the exchequer; which they did as soon as the court broke up. And being admitted, they gave a copy of the Resolutions to Mr. Pitt, who having read them attentively over, said, "He was obliged to the court for what they did grant, which he should accept of; but added, that it would be of no material use, in the present circumstances of the nation, unless the other requisitions which he had made were complied with. That he must refer the affair again in a more pointed manner to the re-consideration of the court, which he would do in a letter to be sent to the Bank next Tuesday morning, for the previous deliberation of the committee; and that he would be glad to see the governor and deputy governor again before the next court should meet."

(No. 22.)—LETTER from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Resolution of the Court of Directors, 28th of July, 1796.

Downing-street, Wednesday, July 27th.

Gentlemen;—After attentively considering the resolutions of your court, which I received from you on Thursday last, I feel it an indispensable duty, however unwilling I am to

urge any request which appears to them liable to any difficulty or objection to represent to you, in the most earnest manner, that it will be impossible to avoid the most serious and distressing embarrassments to the public service, unless, in addition to the accommodation which has been already agreed to for the present month, the court can consent to advance the second sum of 800,000*l.* in the month of August, and can also make provision for the payment of such farther treasury bills as may fall due in the next month, or as may be drawn payable in September and October. With respect to those for the two latter months, as none such have yet been accepted, I should hope an arrangement may be made for accepting them, payable at a period subsequent to October, by which means the inconvenience of the advance may possibly be in a great degree obviated. I must request you to take the first opportunity of laying this application before your court, and to state to them, that objects of the utmost importance to the public are involved in their determination upon it.—I have, &c.

(Signed) WM. PITT.

Resolved, That this court do agree to advance, for the service of the public, the sum of 800,000*l.* towards the end of the month of August, on the security of exchequer bills to be issued under the act of parliament on the surplus of the consolidated fund; and that such treasury bills as have been accepted, and shall fall due during the month of August, be likewise discharged on a deposit of like exchequer bills to be issued on the consolidated fund to an equal amount, which bills have been stated by the chancellor of the exchequer to be about the sum of 300,000*l.*—That this court do not engage to advance for any sum of treasury bills which may be drawn, and shall fall due after the month of August.—That this court do expect that the chancellor of the exchequer will give a promise that a new mode of paying the treasury bills shall be adopted immediately on the meeting of parliament, as this court will not continue the mode of discharging them any longer.

Resolved, That the court, having granted this accommodation with great reluctance, and contrary to their wishes, the governor be desired to present to Mr. Pitt a copy of the following memorial; and request of him, that, for the justification of the court of directors, the same may be laid before his majesty's cabinet:

"The court of directors of the Bank of England, fully sensible of the alarming and dangerous situation of the public credit of this kingdom, and deeply impressed with the communication lately made to them by the right hon. William Pitt, both by letter and in a conference with the governor and deputy governor, are very willing and desirous to do every thing in their power to support the national credit, and to enable his majesty's ministers to carry on the public service; but in

complying with the request made to them by the right hon. William Pitt, in his letter of the 27th instant, they think that they should be wanting in their duty to their proprietors, and to the public, if that compliance was not accompanied with the following most serious and solemn remonstrance; which, for the justification of their court, they desire may be laid before his majesty's cabinet.

"They beg leave to declare, that nothing could induce them, under the present circumstances, to comply with the demand now made upon them, but the dread that their refusal might be productive of a greater evil, and nothing but the extreme pressure and exigency of the case can in any shape justify them for acceding to this measure; and they apprehend, that in so doing they render themselves totally incapable of granting any farther assistance to government during the remainder of this year, and unable even to make the usual advances on the land and malt for the ensuing year, should those bills be passed before Christmas."

"They likewise consent to this measure, in a firm reliance that the repeated promises so frequently made to them, that the advances on the treasury bills should be completely done away, may be actually fulfilled at the next meeting of parliament. and the necessary arrangements taken to prevent the same from ever happening again, as they conceive it to be an unconstitutional mode of raising money, what they are not warranted by their charter to consent to, and an advance always extremely inconvenient to themselves."

(No. 23.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 9th of August, 1796.

Some lists of treasury bills accepted, payable at the Bank, of which about 37,000*l.* fall due in September and October, being brought down to the Bank, the governor and deputy governor this day waited on Mr. Pitt, to mention this matter to him; and to remind him that the court had resolved not to pay any bills on the treasury due in those months, unless provision was made for the same by the treasury. Mr. Pitt thanked them for the attention, and told them, that it was meant to prepare money at the Bank for the discharge of those bills.

(No. 24.)—At a Court of Directors at the Bank on Thursday, the 3d of November, 1796.

The following LETTER from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, addressed to the Governor and Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, having been read, viz.

Downing-street, Nov. 3, 1796.

Gentlemen;—I have to request you to represent to your court, that it will contribute essentially to the public service, if they think proper, to advance the amount (as it may be wanted) of exchequer bills usually raised on the land and malt; and that I shall, in that

case, be enabled to make provision for the payment of the balance now due on treasury bills, at such time and in such proportions as may be agreed upon by them.—I have, &c.

(Signed) WM. PITT.

Resolved, That the lords of the Treasury be accommodated with the sum of 2,750,000*l.* on the land and malt taxes 1797, on the following conditions: that the sum of 1,513,345*l.* 19*s.* 7*d.* already advanced by the Bank on treasury bills of exchange, be paid thereout; and that all the treasury bills directed to be paid at the Bank, which shall fall due in the months of November and December, shall be discharged and satisfied by money to be sent down for the purpose; and that from the first day of January, 1797, provision shall be made, on notice that bills have been accepted to the amount of 100,000*l.*, that money or exchequer bills to that amount shall be issued to the Bank three days before the whole sum becomes due. The government was desired to inform the chancellor of the exchequer with the above resolution, and at the same time mention to him, that the court intended to adhere strictly to these terms, and hoped he would give directions that no alteration should take place respecting them.

(No. 25.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1st of February, 1797.

The governor and deputy governor yesterday waited upon the chancellor of the exchequer, to represent to him how uneasy the court were at their large advances for government, and especially on the treasury bills paid, which now amounted to 1,554,635*l.*, and would in a few days be augmented to 1,819,318*l.*; and required that some effective measure should be immediately taken for the payment of the whole of this sum, as had been so seriously promised them should be done at the opening of this year.

Mr. Pitt acknowledged his intentions, and wish to have done it; but said, that he had been prevented by the very pressing calls for various other services. He said, however, he would consider over his payments and resources, and would endeavour to form some plan, for the repayment of the treasury bills, against the next day, when the governor and deputy governor were to wait upon him again about the business of the national stock. Accordingly, this day Mr. Pitt resumed the subject, and said, that he was endeavouring to sell exchequer bills; out of which he hoped to be able to pay about 300,000*l.* at present; which the governor wished him to do, that the Bank might be provided for the bills now falling due. Mr. Pitt said, as to future payment he believed he could propose to pay every week about 150,000*l.*, or in that proportion, until the whole sum now due was paid off. Mr. Pitt, however, hinted in conversation, that another large sum of bills had appeared from St. Domingo. The governor begged he would give us an idea to what

amount they were. He said, about 700,000*l.*; on which the governor expressed great apprehension about such an access to the present advance; and begged of Mr. Pitt to put off the acceptance of these fresh bills, or, at least, to protract the acceptance of them to a term of two months beyond their tenor; which, he said, he would consider about, and take his resolution.

The governor then desired Mr. Pitt to write a letter officially to him, and he would lay it before the court, and take their resolutions upon it. Mr. Pitt then hinted that he should want some money to send to Ireland, that he had been applied to for a large sum, but that 200,000*l.* in specie would be necessary. The governor and deputy governor told him, that any farther drain of cash from the Bank would, in these times, be very dangerous, as they acknowledged that the cash had been very materially lessened of late, and they therefore begged of him to try if 100,000*l.* would not be sufficient.

(No. 26.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 3rd of February, 1797.

The governor and deputy governor this day waited on Mr. Pitt, to mention to him that his letter, which contained the engagement to liquidate the present advance on treasury bills, was yesterday laid before the court; who, after a long debate on the subject, had submitted to the plan as proposed by him; but that, by the direction of the court, they recommended a punctual performance of the payments promised—which Mr. Pitt said should certainly be observed; and that he had hopes of being able to pay it off, even quicker than he had proposed.

(No. 27.)—Resolution of the Court of Directors, and Deputation's Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 10th of February, 1797.

The committee met this day, and taking into their most serious consideration the certainty, which now threatens us, that Mr. Pitt will be obliged to bring forward here a loan for Ireland, to the amount of 1,500,000*l.*; and the evils which will probably follow on such a measure to this house, by the sending over to that country a great part of the sum in specie—they resolved to ask of Mr. Pitt, a considerable reduction of the Bank's present advances to government, to be raised, as he hinted, by a new loan: and they made out a statement for that purpose to be presented to him, which was as follows:

Arrears of advance on land and	£.
malt 1794	337,000
Ditto ditto 1795	491,000
Ditto ditto 1796	2,392,000
Exchequer bills on vote of credit . .	968,800
Ditto on consolidated fund 1796 . .	1,323,000
Treasury bills paid	1,674,645
	£. 7,186,445
Besides arrears of interest due, &c.	400,000

They desired that a deputation of the governor, deputy governor, Mr. Bosanquet, and Mr. S. Thornton, would go up to Mr. Pitt, and request, that if the Irish loan must take place, he would undertake first to arrange the repayment of the above sum to the Bank, as the only means which the committee can propose for the defence of the Bank against the mischiefs they dread from the Irish loan.

And the committee also desired, that, if necessary, a special court of directors might be summoned to meet, on this business, on Monday next, at twelve o'clock, that the business may be brought before the court.

In consequence of the above resolution, the governor, and other gentlemen deputed, went to Mr. Pitt, showed him the statement of the Bank's demands on government, which they wished to have paid off, or so arranged before the settlement of the Irish loan. Mr. Pitt, on the article of the treasury bills, said, that he had already laid his plan for the discharge of that article, which he meant to adhere to, and that therefore this article might be left out of the present agreement; and that he would lay his plan for the liquidation of the rest, by an addition to the late voluntary loan, or by some other measure as might be most forcible. The deputation pressed on him the necessity of attending, in his plans, to the point of making the payments to the Bank precede those which might be fixed for the Irish loan. They also informed him of their intention to call a special court of directors, to impart their business to them, which might be held on Monday or Tuesday next, as might best suit Mr. Pitt. He begged it might be called on Monday, as he said that Mr. Pelham, the secretary of state for Ireland, had been here some days on this business, and that it was of the utmost consequence that the matter should be fixed, and advice sent over to that country of it as soon as possible. On which the governor told Mr. Pitt, that a court of directors should be summoned for Monday; and requested, that he would furnish him with a letter, explanatory of the business, to be laid before the court; which Mr. Pitt promised should be sent to the Bank either to-morrow or on Sunday.

(No. 28.)—Letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and opinions of the Court of Directors.

Downing-street, 15th of February, 1797.

Gentlemen;—Since our last conversation I have turned my attention to an idea, which has been suggested to me, of raising the money wanted for Ireland, as part of one loan together with that which may be requisite here, and of leaving the time and mode of remittance to be settled between the English and Irish governments, according to circumstances. Such a measure might possibly prevent some inconvenience, which would arise from there being otherwise two loans in

the market at the same time, and might also give better means of regulating the remittance in the manner least inconvenient. It would at the same time hardly fail to be acceptable to Ireland, as it would probably procure money for them at a much cheaper rate than they could otherwise borrow it. I have to request the favour of you to learn the sentiments of your court on this point, and to communicate to me the result. I have, &c.

(Signed) WM. PITT.

After a debate on the subject of this letter, it was the opinion of the court, that it might be better for the minister of this country to have the control over the remittance of the sum intended for Ireland, than, by an open loan for Ireland, to leave in the power of that government to draw the money away, without any consideration of the case of the Bank. And the governor and deputy governor, and Mr. S. Thornton, were desired to wait on Mr. Pitt with the following observation on his letter, as dictated by the court:

"It is the opinion of this court, That the plan of adding to the intended English loan, the sum that has been proposed to be raised here for the government of Ireland, and of making the remittances at such periods, and in such manner, as may be least inconvenient, is preferable to the raising an Irish loan in England by itself, and fixing the payments and remittances in a matter, which cannot be varied according to circumstances. But the court must repeat their apprehensions, that any measure which tends to carry money out of the country, is replete with alarming consequences to the Bank of England."

The paper containing the above was accordingly carried up to Mr. Pitt, who read it with attention, and then returned it.

(No. 29.)—RESOLUTION of the Court of Directors, 23rd of February, 1797.

"Resolved, That it is the opinion of this court that the treasury bills of exchange shall be paid, which will become due in the course of next week, to the amount of about 150,000*l.*; but that no other treasury bills of exchange shall be paid by this house, until money be issued to the Bank to pay the same."

The governor and deputy governor were desired to go and wait upon Mr. Pitt with the above resolution, as soon as the court broke up.

(No. 30.)—Addition to (No. 26.)

The governor mentioned to Mr. Pitt, the great distress and inconvenience which the Bank, the bankers, and the public, suffered or want of a fresh coinage of silver, and requested the chancellor of the exchequer to take some early measures for a redress thereof by a new coinage, at least of some part of what would be wanted.

(No. 31.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 18th of February, 1797.

The governor and deputy governor this day waited upon the chancellor of the exchequer, by his appointment; when he mentioned to them, that he was exceedingly pressed by the government of Ireland, to allow them to raise a loan in this country; and he thought that about 1,500,000*l.* would be the sum. He knew it would be a difficult and unpleasant measure to be carried through, but thought it right to speak to the governor of the Bank about it. The governor immediately told Mr. Pitt, that such a scheme must have the worst effect possible; that it would cause the ruin of the Bank; for that such a loan raised here would all be sent over in money to Ireland, and would drain much of our specie from us. Mr. Pitt desired that the matter might at present be only communicated to the committee of treasury, but not to the court of directors: which the governor promised to do, and to wait upon him again tomorrow with Mr. Puget, as Mr. Pitt wished to speak with him also on the subject.

(No. 32.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 9th of February, 1797.

The governor this day communicated to the committee the circumstance mentioned by Mr. Pitt yesterday, about a farther loan for Ireland, which struck them all as likely to produce the most disastrous consequences to the house. And the committee joined in opinion fully, that the governor in his interview with Mr. Pitt to-day, should tell him, that under the present state of the Bank's advances to government here, such a measure would threaten ruin to the house, and most probably bring us under the necessity to shut up our doors.

After the court this day, the governor, with Mr. S. Thornton (as the deputy could not attend) and Mr. Puget, waited on Mr. Pitt; who told them, that notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers which they foresaw by his carrying into execution a farther loan for Ireland, he found it to be a measure of government absolutely necessary; but that he would do every thing he could to obviate the difficulties, by making the Bank more easy in other points; and he proposed to raise, by an addition to the present voluntary loan, or by other means, with the consent of the subscribers to that loan, whatever sum the Bank might desire to be paid off from its advances to government. He proposed this, from an opinion that it was possibly in the power of the Bank to render itself safe by the diminution of its outstanding notes; and he added that he wished this reduction of their notes to be effected by a diminution of their advances to government rather than by lessening their commercial discounts.

On the governor's stating, that in the event of the measure of an Irish loan being effected

here, the Bank would probably think it necessary to restrain their advances, both to government and to the public, by way of discount: Mr. Pitt answered, he had rather pay back five millions to the Bank, than that they should restrain their discounts three millions; or to that effect. Mr. Pitt expressed an opinion that a good deal of the money that had been taken from this country last year was returned; and, perhaps kept back in London, or in other parts of the kingdom, from whence he hoped to draw the resources he wants by a loan under the proposed circumstances. Some discussion took place with Mr. Puget, whether a part at least of the Irish loan might not be negotiated in Ireland: and reason was given to think that a trial for this would be made. Mr. Puget suggested, that a pecuniary assistance given by this government to the Irish government might be preferable to a loan, as the money might be demanded back when there was pressing occasion for it: but Mr. Pitt was of opinion, that if the necessity to call it back should arise, Ireland would not be able to pay it; whereas he hoped the specie would find its way back, by the regular course of trade, as soon as the internal state of that country would permit.

Mr. Pitt proposed that the repayment to the Bank should be made proportionate to the instalments on the Irish loan, or to exceed them considerably if desired: also that no discount for prompt payment should be made on the Irish loan.

On their return from Mr. Pitt, the governor ordered a committee to be summoned to meet to-morrow, on very special affairs, at twelve o'clock.

(No. 33.)—LETTER from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Resolution of the Court of Directors, 13th of February, 1797.

At a court of directors held this day on special affairs, the governor laid before the court the matter which had been proposed to the committee of the Treasury by Mr. Pitt, and which had been the subject of the several minutes of the committee on the 8th, 9th, and 10th instant, in their private book: and the governor then read to the court the following letter, which he had received from the chancellor of the exchequer; viz.

Downing-street, February 10th, 1797.

Gentlemen;—I have to request you to acquaint your court, that from the representations received from Ireland, it appears indispensable for the public service, that a loan should be raised here for the use of that government, to the amount of 1,500,000*l.*; on which I understand a considerable deposit will be requisite about the end of March. I am fully sensible that, in the present situation, such a loan might produce great temporary inconvenience here; and unless some measures were adopted to guard against its

possible effects, might make it appear necessary for the Bank, from prudence and precaution, to restrain the accommodation which they now give to the commerce of the country within much narrower limits than is desirable. In order to avoid this great inconvenience, and at the same time to be enabled to provide for the urgent demands from Ireland, which are connected with the greatest interest and safety, to prevent farther embarrassments in the vigorous exertions which the present crisis may require; it may, I think, be expedient to propose to parliament to raise money sufficient for paying off six (or if it should be thought necessary) seven millions (including the treasury bills) of the sum now outstanding due from the public to the Bank. So great a reduction of their advances must, I trust, render them much more at ease, as to the effect of other operations. I wish also to have it understood, that I should propose the repayments to be received by the Bank, to take place by instalments, at least as early, and to as great an amount, as any remittance that could be made to Ireland, under the instalments to be fixed for that loan. I shall be extremely glad to know the sentiments of the court on that subject, and to confer with you, and any other gentlemen of the court, on any point which may require explanation, and on the best means of carrying the measure into execution, if it meets with the concurrence of the court. I have, &c.

(Signed) WM. PITT.

The court received this communication with great uneasiness, from an apprehension of the bad consequences which would, in all probability, arise to the Bank from the remittance of such a sum to Ireland, and the great drain of cash which it would occasion; and after a very serious debate upon the subject, they came to the following resolution; viz.

“Resolved, That the court is of an opinion, that the repayment of seven millions of the money advanced by the Bank to government will be of very essential service to this house; but the court is nevertheless extremely apprehensive that the negotiating the proposed loan for Ireland in this country, will necessarily endanger the safety of the Bank of England, by the large drains of cash which it must occasion for the remittance of that sum to Ireland.”

The governor and deputy governor, with Mr. Darell and Mr. Bosanquet, were deputed by the court to wait upon the chancellor of the exchequer with this resolution; and they took with them a copy of it in a paper sealed up, that in case Mr. Pitt should require it to be left with him to show it to the cabinet, it might be in a situation guarded from the eyes of the people in office. The deputation waited on Mr. Pitt when the court broke up, and waited till he came home; when being admitted, the governor told him, that a special court had been held on the subject, and

that he and the other gentlemen were deputed to bring him the resolution of the court upon it; which Mr. Pitt read attentively; and desiring to have a copy left with him, the one sealed up was given to him; which he was desired by the governor to return to him when he had communicated it to the cabinet. In the conversation which took place afterwards, the governor asked if it was not possible that a part of the 1,500,000*l.* could be raised in Ireland for its own use! Mr. Pitt said, that the sum mentioned was all expected from this country—that a farther sum was wanted in the whole; but that the Irish government hoped to raise the remainder in that country. On the subject of the loan to be raised here to pay off the above sum to the Bank, Mr. Pitt said, he meant to make it equal, not only to that purpose, but to set him at his ease for other parts of the public service, which he had not been able to calculate with sufficient exactitude on bringing out the last loan. That he meant to raise this additional sum in the same funds, and, if possible, by the same subscribers, to whom proposals would be made, with an allowance for their loss on the former engagement; and that if he was disappointed in this expectation, he must take other measures, as usual.

After this, the governor asked of Mr. Pitt if it could not be made compatible with the forms of office, that when the payments should come to be made on this proposed loan, the money might be retained at once by the Bank, as far as was intended for the liquidation of their advances, without being sent up to the exchequer, as was hitherto practised, which mode had often caused a delay of many days; and once last year a total disappointment of the sum? Mr. Pitt said, that he saw no reason why this routine of office should not be altered—that he would think of it, and order another arrangement.

(No. 34.)—RESOLUTION of the Court of Directors, and Deputation's Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 21st of February, 1797.

The committee observing, with great uneasiness, the large and constant decrease in the cash, held a particular consultation on that subject this day; and on examination into the state of the cash since the beginning of this year, they found that in the course of the month of January there had been a decrease of *l.* and since the beginning of this month a farther loss of *l.* and that the cash was now reduced to between *l.* and about *l.* value, in bullion and foreign coin, and about the value of *l.* in silver bullion. Perceiving also, by the constant calls of the bankers from all parts of the town for cash, that there must be some extraordinary reasons for this drain, arising probably from the alarms of an expected invasion; the committee, after maturely considering the matter,

resolved to send a notice to the chancellor of the exchequer, of the situation of matters at the Bank: and to explain exactly to him how the cash is circumstanced, that he may, if possible and proper, strike out some means of alleviating the public alarms, and stopping this apparent disposition in people's minds for having a large deposit of cash in their houses. The governor, deputy governor, with Mr. Darell and Mr. Bosanquet, were deputed to wait upon Mr. Pitt, who went to him; and after describing to him the anxiety of mind which all the directors were under on this subject, they explained to Mr. Pitt the exact particulars above-mentioned. Mr. Pitt seemed aware that this unusual drain of cash from the Bank must arise from the alarm of an invasion, which he observed was now become much more general than he could think necessary. He said, that by all his informations he could not learn of any hostile preparations of consequence making in France to invade this country, except the fleet which was re-fitting at Brest, after being driven off from the coast of Ireland; but that he could not answer that no partial attack on this country would be made by such a mad and desperate enemy as we had to deal with. The deputation pressed on Mr. Pitt to declare something of this kind in parliament, in order to ease the public mind.

The deputation then mentioned to him the necessity of bringing forward the new loan, out of which the repayment of the seven millions to the Bank was to be made, as in the present emergency it was of the utmost consequence that our advances should be contracted as soon as possible. He said, he was occupied on that point, and hoped, in a couple of days, to have his plan so arranged as to be able to call the gentlemen together, with whom it might be necessary to negotiate for a new loan. Mr. Pitt also mentioned, that he hoped the committee would, in the present situation of matters, think it necessary to endeavour at obtaining a supply of gold from foreign countries, which the governor told him they were considering about, and should do what they could therein.

(No. 35.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 22nd of February, 1797.

Messrs. Goldsmid and Eliason attended the committee this day, and were directed to give farther orders to Hamburgh for the purchase of gold; and were told that an application would immediately be made to the minister to order a frigate or armed sloop to go to Hamburgh to take in such gold as might be bought, and also to desire that the restriction on the captains of the packets, not to take any gold on board at Hamburgh for this country, might be taken off. The governor and deputy governor waited on Mr. Pitt on this subject, who promised to apply to the Admiralty for directions about sending out a frigate or armed sloop; and that he would

apply to the postmaster-general to give the orders to the captains of the packets.—The governor pressed Mr. Pitt again on the subject of the treasury bills, and told him, that he feared the court would not agree to pay the treasury bills, which fall due next week.—Mr. Pitt said, he would send 50,000*l.* to the Bank in part provision thereof, but that he did not think he could raise the money to the full amount of the bills due.

(No. 36.)—Interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 24th of February, 1797.

At a committee of the whole court held this day, it appeared that the loss of cash yesterday was above *l.* and that about *l.* were already drawn out this day, which gave such an alarm for the safety of the house, that the deputy governor and Mr. Bosanquet were desired to wait on Mr. Pitt to mention to him these circumstances, and to ask him how far he thought the Bank might venture to go on paying cash, and when he would think it necessary to interfere before our cash was so reduced as might be detrimental to the immediate service of the state. Mr. Pitt said, this was a matter of great importance, and that he must be prepared with some resolution to bring forward in the council, for a proclamation to stop the issue of cash from the Bank, and to give the security of parliament to the notes of the Bank. In consequence of which he should think it might be proper to appoint a secret committee of the House of Commons to look into the state of the Bank affairs; which they assured him the Bank were well prepared for, and would produce to such a committee. Mr. Pitt also observed, that he should have no objection to propose to parliament, in case of a proclamation, to give parliamentary security for bank notes. The governor and deputy governor this day waited on Mr. Pitt, to mention to him, that it would in the present circumstances be highly requisite that some general meeting of the bankers and chief merchants of London should be held, in order to bring on some resolution for the support of the public credit in this alarming crisis; and they took the liberty to recommend to Mr. Pitt, to have a private meeting of some of the chief bankers at his house to-morrow, at three o'clock, in which the plan for a more general meeting on Tuesday or Wednesday next might be laid; in the propriety of which Mr. Pitt agreed, and said he would summon a previous meeting for to-morrow accordingly. This was communicated by the governor to the committee.

Answer to (No. 1.)—On the communication of the resolution (No. 1) on the 17th of January 1795, the chancellor of the exchequer expressed his thanks for the communication; and said he should arrange his measures in conformity: but that though he was going to reduce immediately the sum of the treasury bills, it might not be in his power to

bring them down to the sum stipulated, till after the first payment of the loan.

Answer to (No. 2.)—The chancellor of the exchequer having read the paper, seemed fully convinced of the propriety of the representation; and declared, that it should have been attended to on his part before, but that in the multiplicity of public affairs it had been forgotten. He, however, said, that it should be complied with out of hand, and that he would order 1,200,000*l.* to be paid to the Bank, on that account, immediately.

Answer to (No. 4.)—On presenting this paper, Mr. Pitt said, it was not his fault that the account had not been diminished, for he had ordered, some time since, two warrants to be made out, amounting to above 600,000*l.*, which were now completing, and would soon come down to us; showing, at the same time, the preparatory parts thereof. The governor then replied, that 600,000*l.* would not nearly reduce the amount to the agreed sum; that our calls had lately been so great, with large drains of cash and bullion, as made us earnestly wish to lessen our credits as much as possible; and then he wished Mr. Pitt would, without particular inconvenience to himself, name a day from whence the resolution of the court should take place. The deputy governor asked, if Mr. Pitt could do this next Monday (when the Chairs were to meet him on the national-stock business?) he replied, he could not, he believed, be ready to do it by that time; but he might probably then inform us farther about it; and added his hope, that the Bank did not, for this year, mean to restrict him from the credit of 500,000*l.* on treasury bills.

Answer to (No. 5.)—Mr. Pitt acknowledged, that he had not, in his note of Wednesday last, entered into any particulars about the payment of the treasury bills; but that he meant, if the Bank assisted him with the two millions and a half in question, on exchequer bills, payable out of the growing produce of the consolidated fund, in the quarters for October next and the April following, he did mean to pay part of the Bank's advance on the treasury bills out of that money; but he hoped that the whole of it would not be required, but that it should be provided for out of other funds.—The governor then observed to him, how frequent promises had been given to reduce this advance to the limit of 500,000*l.*, which had never yet been carried into effect; and begged leave to represent, how desirous the Bank court was, to have the payment of the treasury acceptances otherwise arranged than at the Bank; which Mr. Pitt said, should be taken up on a future occasion. The governor said, he could not engage for any thing; but he knew how desirous the court always was to assist the government; though a provident care for their establishment must precede all other objects. Mr. Pitt observed on this, that the welfare of the Bank, we must suppose, was

an object of equal importance to him as to us. The governor then added, that though he did not engage for the court, if Mr. Pitt could promise that two millions of the sum now asked for should be applied to extinguish so much of the advance on the treasury bills, he believed it might be acceded to. Mr. Pitt replied, that he could not answer for so large a part being paid immediately; but that he would, on this information, draw up a new letter to the court, to be considered next Thursday; and he wished to see the two governors at twelve o'clock on Tuesday next, to submit to them the plan of his letter: and the governor and deputy promised to wait on him at that time accordingly.

Answers to (No. 7).—After Mr. Pitt had read this paper, with great attention, twice, he began by expressing his satisfaction and approbation of the measure of communicating such matters to him, saying, that he would most certainly frame his arrangements in a manner that might enable him to remove our fears, and prevent unpleasant consequences; and that he would endeavour to do this in such a manner as should produce no alarm; strongly recommending to the court of directors to use every possible precaution to prevent that also.

The governor then said, That he hoped Mr. Pitt did not conceive it to be the intention of the court to refuse the advance of the land and malt, 1796; but only that it was their wish to protract it for some time. Mr. Pitt said he understood it so, and should avoid applying for it until it might be more suitable to the Bank. He also said, he should certainly reimburse a million of the treasury bills, and repay the 1,100,000*l.* as soon as the accounts were made up; and if it was necessary, the 1,400,000*l.* remaining should be reimbursed.

The governor mentioned to him the drain of cash to Ireland, the calls for the West India armament, and the probability of soon perceiving those that may be occasioned by the claimants of the neutral ships being reimbursed; in all which he seemed to concur. Then the governor stated to him, that the price of gold being so much above the value of our guineas, must necessarily impress his mind with the unavoidable consequences. The chancellor of the exchequer viewed this in a most serious light.

The governor then mentioned the probability of the claims of the American ships taken in the West Indies soon coming to a hearing, and which, he said, from report, would amount to near four millions. Mr. Pitt agreed that appeals were soon to be made, but he did not think the amount would come up to such a sum. The governor then resumed the subject of the treasury bills; and hoped that, after the meeting of parliament, Mr. Pitt would so arrange matters as to prevent their continuing to be paid by the Bank in the manner lately adopted.

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His reply was, that this object would soon cease; their amount seemed to have impressed his mind with a design to discontinue the service that occasioned them; the troops were about to return home. He candidly acknowledged that the expense of our troops on the continent had been enormous; and intimated, that the bent and operation of the war, as long as it did still continue, would be naval, and in the West Indies.

The governor then made his acknowledgements to Mr. Pitt for the indulgence of so much time as he had given to him and the deputy governor. The chancellor of the exchequer said he was going out of town tomorrow, for a week, and at his return would be glad to see the governor again, if any thing material should occur.

ADDITIONAL PAPERS.

No. I.—Copy of a Resolution of the Court of Directors of the Bank of England, dated December the 3d, 1795. Moved for by Mr. Sheridan.

Resolved, That the following resolution of the court be communicated to the chancellor of the exchequer.

That the court of directors, after a very solemn deliberation, adequate to the importance of the subject, are unanimously of opinion, that should such a loan* take place, they are but too well grounded in declaring (from the actual effects of the Emperor's last loan, and the continued drains of specie and bullion they still experience) that they have the most cogent reasons to apprehend very momentous and alarming consequences. They are, therefore, led to hope (after expressing their acknowledgments to the chancellor of the exchequer for having hinted that the welfare and safety of the Bank should in this matter supersede every other consideration) that he will be pleased to lay aside the adoption of such a measure, which they beg leave to repeat, would be in their opinion most fatal in its consequences.

No. II.—Copy of an Opinion of the Committee of the Treasury, January the 14th, 1796.

It is the opinion of the committee of the Treasury, that the governor and deputy governor should represent to the chancellor of the exchequer, that they cannot look upon the scheme of assisting the Emperor to raise a loan in Germany by the guarantee of the parliament of Great Britain, in any light which will not, one way or other be detrimental to this country, even if a law were passed by parliament to prevent British subjects from taking any share therein: that such a call for money in Germany will occasion demands of it from hence: Germans, Italians, and other foreign capitalists, who have property here, will be induced to

* Viz. a loan of 3,000,000*l.* to the Emperor.

draw it away. People in Holland, who, by the late acts, have money locked up here, may go to Germany and draw for it from thence. That funds, which would otherwise be employed in speculations of trade with England, may, by such an opportunity of investment at home, be diverted from the one to the other purpose: that the exchange between this country and Hamburgh may be much affected by it: that in spite of legal prohibitions, it is to be apprehended that some people here would take shares in such a negotiation, under the names of their foreign correspondents. From these and other causes, they are fully of opinion, that the governor and deputy governor can give no advice to Mr. Pitt in favour of such a measure; which is indeed of a wide political extent, and beyond the line of their duty to judge of.

No. III.—Copy of a Resolution, dated the 11th of February, 1796.

Resolved, That it is the opinion of this court, founded upon its experience of the effects of the late imperial loan, that if any farther loan or advance of money to the Emperor, or to any other foreign state, should, in the present state of affairs take place, it will, in all probability, prove fatal to the Bank of England.—The court of directors do therefore most earnestly deprecate the adoption of any such measure; and they solemnly protest against any responsibility for the calamitous consequences that may follow thereupon.—Resolved, That the governor and deputy governor do communicate these resolutions to the chancellor of his majesty's exchequer.

Answers of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the two Resolutions of the Court of Directors of the Bank, of the 3d of December, 1795, and 11th of February, 1796, on the subject of an Imperial Loan.

Answer to the first.—The chancellor of the exchequer having perused the resolution with great attention, repeatedly said, that certainly, as matters were there stated, he should not think at present of bringing forward such a measure; adding, that though he should, in opening the budget, make it known that he made reserve with the present contractors for the loan, to permit the Emperor's raising three millions, should circumstances require it, he should lay aside all thoughts of it, unless the situation of things, relative to the Bank, should so alter as to render such a loan of no importance or inconvenience to them in perspective. The governor promised him, that should such a change take place, and he should wish for the adoption of such a measure, he certainly would communicate it to him with pleasure.—Mr. Pitt wished very much to have the paper left with him, for the purpose of communicating its contents to the cabinet, if he found it necessary; promising, that no one should have a sight of it elsewhere, and that if the governor would call upon him in

two or three days, he would return it to him.

Answer to the second.—Mr. Pitt replied, that after the repeated intimations which he had given to the governor and deputy governor of the Bank, that no farther loan to the Emperor would be resolved on without previous communication with the Bank, and due consideration of the state of their circumstances, he did not see any reason for these resolutions; that he did suppose they were adopted in a moment of alarm, and that he should consider them in that light.

Debate in the Commons on the Bank Restriction Bill.] March 17. On the motion for the second reading of the Bill "for confirming and continuing, for a time to be limited, the restriction, contained in the minute of council of the 26th of February last, on payments of cash by the Bank,"

Mr. Fox said, the same reasons which induced him to agree to the bill being brought in, would influence him not to oppose the second reading. He had a few remarks, however, to make, not upon what the bill actually contained, but upon what it did not contain. There seemed to be no provision in the bill obliging government to receive notes in payment of the taxes which was one part of the plan. He wished also to know how far it was to operate upon the intercourse between individuals. It was extremely desirable it should not operate upon them at all. The House must observe, however, the alarming situation in which every man was placed. There was scarcely any person who did not owe something. How, then, did he stand by the existing laws? If he could not pay his debts in cash, he was liable to be sued and arrested at the will of his creditor, for at present there was no possibility of procuring a supply of specie; so that every man would lie at the mercy of his creditor. This situation was certainly alarming; and it might be particularly hard upon bankers, who were at the mercy of all their customers; yet if it was tolerable, it was undoubtedly better that the inconveniences should be suffered, than that a remedy should be applied: for were the only remedy to which they could have recourse resorted to, the evils attending it would be much more ruinous. There was one blank in the bill which it was of great importance to fill up with judgment; namely, the period during which the bill was to last. He hoped it would be a very short one indeed. He suggested, that as it seemed

to be the opinion of the House, that the quantity of floating debt due from government to the Bank ought to be lessened, a clause should be introduced into the bill to limit the advances of the Bank to government during the period of its operation. He wished also to know, whether, when they were going this length on paper credit, it was not intended to impose some limits to the issue of Bank paper during the existence of this bill?

Sir *John Sinclair* doubted much the propriety of reading the bill a second time that day. The bill related to the public and the Bank. With a view to the public, there was no necessity for hurrying it through this stage; and as it regarded the Bank, the second reading should be postponed, as it had not yet come under the consideration of the directors, who might be inclined to call a meeting of the proprietors of bank stock to take their opinion respecting it.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—Sir; This bill appears to me objectionable *in toto*. No modification can render it agreeable to my palate. I conceive, therefore, that I am perfectly in form, when I oppose the second reading. I consider the order of council prohibiting the Bank from continuing payment in specie, as an act of rapine upon the public creditor. If I give a parliamentary sanction to robbery, I encourage the plunderer to repeat his depredation. The Bank of England is the great wheel which gives uniform and steady motion to our extensive circulation: it is the source of industry, the support of manufactures, the life of domestic trade, and the soul of foreign commerce. Rather than with presumptuous hand arrest the course of this great wheel, the finance-minister should have met the difficulty in any other possible way. But we are told that this bill is to exist for a short time only. Has the minister considered what is likely to take place when this bill shall expire? Will not the holders of Bank of England notes, the very moment that the suspension of payment in specie is at an end rush in large bodies to the Bank, and demand specie? Having been once deluded, will they ever expose themselves to the risk of being deluded a second time? Public confidence once lost, is not easily recovered. The Bank of England was founded amid difficulties. It soon surmounted the prejudices with which it was assailed, and raised itself to the loftiest pinnacle of reputa-

tion: but it is now thrown from its enviable height, and must lose that respect which it has long enjoyed in the eyes of the whole civilized world.

The bill was read a second time.

March 22. On the order of the day for going into a committee on the bill,

Mr. *Nicholls* said, that if he could consider this as a measure for protecting the Bank against those demands which they could not satisfy, he should not object to it. If that had been the sole object of the bill, two regulations alone would have been necessary; but that was not the object. The plan seemed to have in view the converting of the Bank into a mint for the coining of paper currency; and if the bill remained in its present shape, it would be impossible to place any limitation to the issue of notes. At the first establishment of the Bank they were restricted in their emission of notes to the sum owed to them by government: afterwards the emission was increased, but they were forced to pay their notes in cash, if cash was demanded. The House were now going to take off that obligation. The power of getting cash for the notes no longer existed; and in this state of things he knew of no law by which the Bank could be restrained from pouring forth bills to the amount of 100 millions sterling. He wished the House to weigh the subject well. Gentlemen had already seen the progress of a paper currency, both in America and France; it had soon been depreciated, and the expenses of both countries had thereby been considerably increased. The increasing issue of paper money would compel the government to incur an enormous and ruinous debt. When assignats were first circulated in France, all persons were delighted with them. The funds rose—but what was the consequence? They soon came to a discount of 200 for 1. If a paper currency was once established, how could it be got rid of? If gold and silver were once driven out of circulation, how were they to be recovered? The sure consequences of a paper currency would be a debt so enormous, that it would never be removed. The old debts and the new would vanish together, and funded property would sink with them. A revolution in property might produce a revolution in government, and all those scenes of blood which had disgraced France.

The House resolved itself into the com-

mittee. On the clause granting an indemnity to the Bank,

Mr. *Dent* observed, that the present scarcity of cash was partly real and partly ideal. That scarcity had been produced by a variety of circumstances—the alarm of invasion, the melting down of guineas, the sending them abroad, and the immense speculations which had been occasioned by the extended commerce of the country. From the present state of affairs, bankers in general were reduced to a situation of the greatest difficulty and hazard. It was not his wish that notes should be made completely a legal tender, but only so far as the debt of the Bank at present extended; and, in his opinion, the Bank ought to be restricted from issuing any more notes, except with the consent of two-thirds of the proprietors.

Mr. *Fox* said, he meant to vote against the clause. He wished the committee to recollect the progress of the bill. The House had appointed a committee to inquire into a limited question. Whether it was necessary to confirm the order of council? And that committee had reported, not that it was necessary to issue the order, not that it was proper in the Bank to obey it, but now that it was issued and had been obeyed, that it was necessary to continue and confirm it. Another committee was appointed to inquire into the necessity for issuing the order, and the consequent propriety of the Bank obeying it; but they had not yet delivered in their report. Till this report was received, he could not consent to indemnify the Bank, for what it might eventually turn out they ought not to have done. On the face of it they seemed to have acted rather culpably than meritoriously. It was much to be regretted, that such a close and intimate connexion had subsisted between the bank directors and the government; and all that he had heard, tended to make him more and more jealous of any act by which it might be understood, that the Bank was obliged to obey an order of the privy council, or of the king's minister. He had been told, that the Bank had issued 50,000 guineas for the accommodation of private bankers. The measure might be right or wrong: he had not the means of judging; but what he found fault with was, the channel through which the accommodation was obtained. The bankers, instead of petitioning the Bank, went and petitioned the chancellor of the exchequer, who interfered

with the directors of the Bank, and by his influence procured for them this supply. Now every one knew that credit was of such a delicate nature as to be quite unable to bear the smallest touch of power. What would be the consequence of a proceeding, in which private persons went to the minister, and got him to use his influence to make the Bank extend its credit where it had refused to extend it, and to substitute authority in place of confidence? He had heard, from good authority, that because the Bank was not liberal enough in its discounts, the merchants had recourse to the same channel; and that in consequence of another authoritative interference, these discounts were extended. Could public credit stand against such transactions? If the chancellor of the exchequer only advised the Bank as a simple individual, he thought that, after all that had happened, the Bank had chosen a very bad counsellor; but if he advised them in quality of king's minister what would Europe think of the credit of that country where orders were given by the king to the Bank to accommodate particular persons? It was not only contrary to the principles of a free constitution; it was also inconsistent with the existence of public credit. Such an interference in private concerns must undoubtedly destroy its stability. But, perhaps, he should be told, that though individuals were concerned, the effects of the interference were public. This might be said of all private concerns whatever; but still in the affairs of individuals, the king and his ministers were excluded from interfering. He was against granting indemnity to the Bank for another reason, which was, that if the state of things was what it had been represented, and if the persons who entered into the associations which had been so much talked of were sincere in their professions, no indemnity would be necessary. If these associations were extensive enough to protect the Bank for the future, they might certainly be trusted as amply sufficient to protect it for the past. Feeling, therefore, that no indemnity was necessary, that they were not in possession of any grounds upon which, consistently with their duty, they could grant indemnity to the Bank, and feeling, as he did, the danger of allowing the king's minister to interfere in its concerns, he should vote against the clause.

Mr. *Pitt* did not think the clause could be affected by any opinion which might

be hereafter formed from the report of the committee not yet before the House; on the contrary, that it was a natural step to be taken in consequence of the report of the first committee. After the necessity of continuing the order was stated by the committee, and after it was resolved that it should be ratified by the legislature, was it fair that the Bank, which was to be required to obey it, should pay that obedience at the hazard of being subjected to the same penalties to which they would have been liable, if the law never had existed? The other observations of the right hon. gentleman were founded upon two facts, which were said to imply a too ready compliance, on the part of the Bank, to the wishes of government. The fact was, that the private bankers did apply to the Bank of England for a supply of cash; that the Bank acquiesced in the justice of the demand, and the propriety of granting such a supply; but they found that such a compliance was not in their power till they obtained the permission of the privy council, under whose restricting order they held themselves bound to act. The permission of the privy council, therefore, was applied for and granted: the consequence of which was, that for the accommodation, not of individuals, but of the public, 50,000 guineas were distributed by the Bank, in the way suggested by a committee chosen from the whole body of bankers. The right hon. gentleman had alluded to another fact, which he stated as highly reprehensible, namely, that ministers had used their influence with the directors to induce them to enlarge their discounts upon their usual security. What effect his opinion had upon the minds of the directors of the Bank, he could not take upon himself to say; but he confessed that he had at all times frankly avowed his opinion, that extending the discounts of the Bank was the most likely mode of alleviating the pressure of present difficulties, of abridging their duration, and of enabling the Bank in a short time to resume its money transactions. This he certainly had, on a late occasion, expressed as an opinion, but merely as a private opinion, accompanied with no injunction of authority, and leaving the directors to the exercise of their own discretion. And if, in so doing, the directors had happened to coincide in sentiment with him, did it follow, that there was any undue influence employed by

government? There was one other point, of which he should take some notice; namely, how far it might be proper to extend indemnity to other persons? He entertained a sanguine hope, that the associations which had been formed for the purpose of giving currency to bank notes would allay the fears of individuals. He should not, therefore, propose any thing upon that part of the subject at present. But, though these associations might give currency to paper, they could not prevent persons from making demands upon the Bank for cash. To him it would appear most singular, if the House, taking credit for the order in council, should refuse to indemnify the Bank for obeying it during their deliberation upon the subject, and should grant that indemnity only for the time that it became valid.

Mr. Fox said, that the question was not whether the Bank ought to be indemnified for obeying parliament, but whether it ought to be indemnified for obeying the order in council; the necessity of issuing which yet remained to be shown. Perhaps it was highly culpable in the Bank to obey the order; and yet in consequence of that obedience, it might have become necessary to continue the order, which was all that the committee had reported; but if there was no ground upon which they could judge whether the Bank had acted properly or improperly, there was surely no ground upon which they ought to grant past indemnification. The right hon. gentleman contended, that the association might give currency to paper, but that they could not prevent demands being made upon the Bank for cash. But admitting the argument to its full extent, it could apply only to future, and not to retrospective indemnification, and therefore was wholly inapplicable to the present clause. On the subject of his using his influence with the Bank, to induce them to enlarge their discounts, the right hon. gentleman pleaded, that he only expressed his opinion as an individual. He hoped, then, that in future, in all the communications which he might have with the Bank, the directors would consider him in this point of view. These changes of character were not always distinctly understood; he would, therefore, much rather that any other man should advise the Bank than the chancellor of the exchequer.

Sir F. Baring thought it extremely hard, that the Bank should be protected

from the consequences of refusing payment to their creditors, while individuals in a similar situation were deprived of this benefit. The consequences of the measures which had taken place were not yet fully understood. Associations might tend to prevent the mischiefs which might arise at home from the state to which the Bank was reduced; but the evil which might be felt in our communications with foreign states was very serious. He was afraid that foreign merchants would draw upon this country bills payable only in gold and silver, and the Bank continue to issue notes, and individuals struggling to procure specie to answer such bills, the consequence would be a depreciation of bank paper. A similar effect had been produced in Spain, and it was an object of the last importance to guard against it in this country.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that the Bank might have been culpable in the course of their transactions with government; and until this point was ascertained, it was impossible to judge of the propriety of an indemnity. With regard to the interference of the minister, as to the conduct of the Bank with regard to their discounts, he could not conceive so monstrous an idea to be entertained as that the minister should interfere in any other than in his private capacity. The committee did not at present know whether that interference had taken place in consequence of the application of the Bank, or of individual merchants. If it was through the last he doubted whether such an application was very proper.

Mr. *Manning* said, it was right the House should fairly understand the principles on which the Bank had acted with regard to their discounts. The Bank had come to the determination of extending them, from their conviction that such a measure would be productive of advantage. Nor had their judgment been at all influenced by government. It was after considering the representations of commercial men that the directors had exercised their independent discretion. It was of the greater importance to explain this distinctly; as he conceived the purity and complete independence of the Bank were of the highest importance to the state, to themselves, and even to the administration of the country. He believed no commercial man could doubt the propriety of the conduct which the Bank had last week observed. He ex-

pressed a confident hope, that the Bank would very soon go on as before.

Mr. *S. Thornton* confirmed the assertion of the last speaker, that the measures which the Bank deemed it proper to take in regard to discounts, had originated solely in themselves.

Mr. *Pollen* said, it was right to know, before they passed an indemnity for the Bank, whether they had acted in such a manner as to deserve it. At present there was nothing on which to found an opinion either of their guilt or innocence. As well might ministers themselves come forward and ask a bill of indemnity for advising the order in council, while the propriety of that step was in course of discussion.

Mr. *Bastard* said, that in a matter of such vast importance, he could give faith and credit to no man living. He required positive proof to justify every step which was taken. All that was at present known was contained in the statement of the chancellor of the exchequer, on which the order of council was founded. So far, then, he went along with it; but there was nothing there to authorize them to go the length of refusing to pay the public creditor in specie. He was not prepared to say, from any circumstances of which they were in possession, that they should sanction the exchequer in refusing to pay the public creditor in money, because they were to enable the Bank to withhold the payment of their notes to their individual creditors. He should therefore vote against the clause, except in so far as it was confined to that particular object. The real cause of the situation which rendered the measure now in discussion necessary was, the alarm the people had conceived when they saw the safety of the country left to the winds and waves; when they saw the possibility of a French fleet insulting our shores with impunity; and when they saw that the House refused to inquire into the circumstances by which this extraordinary event had happened. If parliament wished to obtain confidence, they ought to give a pledge that they acted a disinterested part; they ought to cut off all motives of action but those of the public welfare; and, if they could not make men honest from principle, they ought to make them upright from necessity. The alarm which the public felt was, that parliament would not act upon these principles. With regard to the indemnity they were called upon to pass, was it for

complying with the order of council, or for having obeyed it? for the Bank had done both. He had no doubt of the culpability, of the bank directors, and wished for an inquiry into their conduct. Parliament ought to cut off entirely the connexion which had been fatally established between government and the Bank, from which a great part of our present calamity arose. Parliament should be restored to its privilege of exclusively bestowing grants of public money; and ministers should be deprived of the power of raising supplies without its consent. Let the merchants of London, however, apply themselves to their commerce, and not attempt to support themselves on the power or authority of ministers. If they really felt the necessity of such an application, they ought to have come to parliament with a statement of their complaint.

Lord *George Cavendish* was not yet prepared to give any opinion with regard to the conduct of the Bank. He thought, however, that the House ought to part with as little control as possible, and should therefore oppose the clause.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* asked, whether gentlemen meant, that the indemnity was only to commence with the act? Did they consider the extraordinary situation in which the Bank would be placed? The order of council was communicated to the Bank early on Monday morning, and a few hours afterwards the message was received from his majesty, communicating the event. The committee, then, could not mean to subject the Bank, acting upon this order only a few hours before it came before the House, to all the inconveniences which would arise from the intermediate delay of three weeks. There was no instance where indemnity was given, in which it did not refer back to the act which made it necessary. He conceived, therefore, that here likewise the indemnity would go back to the very act on which it was founded.

Mr. *Whitbread* said, it was of no importance whether it was five minutes or five months between the period of the communication to parliament, and the obedience which the Bank gave to the order of council, for in that intervening space the important step was taken. As the propriety or impropriety of this step, therefore, was the subject of consideration, and as there was nothing on which to form a judgment, he could not agree to the clause of indemnity.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, that to give an indemnity without examination, was to establish the principle that the Bank was always justified in obeying an order of council, and was always to have an act of indemnity. Whether an indemnity was to be given to all bankers was a difficult question. No association could secure merchants and bankers against demands in specie from abroad. It was a degrading situation to be left to the mercy of those who might be mischievous enough to press for payments in cash, while they had no means of making the payment. So far was he from wishing to deprive commerce of any means of support and encouragement, that he thought the Bank instituted for commercial purposes, and wished to see that connexion between government and the Bank dissolved, by which it had been prevented from fulfilling its proper purposes. He wished this divorce to take place, that commerce might receive that share of attention and indulgence to which it was entitled, and that the Bank might safely exercise that liberality of discount which was required. But if there were two customers, one of whom had obtained accommodation to the amount of ten millions, and the other three, how was it possible that the commercial advantages to be expected could be derived from the Bank? Public meetings had been held, at which a respectable member of that House (alderman *Lushington*) had presided, at which it had been resolved to apply to the chancellor of the exchequer to interpose his authority with the Bank. From this it appeared, that the Bank had been thought to be niggardly; and the success of these gentlemen in their application had naturally been imputed to the authority of the minister. He was glad to hear, however, what had been said by the two directors. Till the co-operation, not to say collusion, which had been manifested by the Bank in all the transactions of government was abolished, the credit of the Bank could never be restored. If the arguments used by the chancellor of the exchequer were not coupled with a promise to pay what was due by government, the Bank, by continuing to issue paper without limits, would soon be reduced to a state of insolvency.

Alderman *Lushington* said, that the merchants of London felt severely the want of a due proportion of circulating medium, which want was increased by the war; it therefore became necessary, that a meeting

should be called, to take the subject into consideration. The first resolution was, to wait upon the chancellor of the exchequer, who heard them with the utmost attention, but said it was not in his power to grant any relief. Another meeting took place, and he and some other gentlemen waited on the bank directors; and when he had stated to them, that the commerce of the country had increased to such a degree, that the exports and imports amounted to above 16 millions more in 1796 than they did in 1790, the directors saw the propriety of the application, and the necessary accommodation was granted. The trade of this country had increased to such a degree, that there was not sufficient circulating medium. The exports had risen lately from sixteen or seventeen to thirty millions; and every gentleman must feel that the circulating medium bore no proportion to the property of the country.

Sir *F. Baring* said, that an improving commerce required no aid but what it derived from its own energy and resources, and that the difficulties under which it laboured, was the result of the political circumstances of the country, and not of the want of a circulating medium.

The clause was then agreed to. The next clause being read,

Mr. *Fox* said, he thought the operation of the clause should not extend to dividend warrants. He now gave notice, that he should move as an amendment to this clause, "That the Bank should be prohibited from making any advances to government by which the existing debt should be increased during the continuance of the present act."

Mr. *Pitt* conceived, that if there was any necessity for the clause alluded to, it must be extended to the payment of dividends to such an amount as must render the minute of council and the proposed restriction wholly superfluous and nugatory; for the state of the Bank was utterly incompatible with the operation of such a clause. The public had stipulated to make their payments on every loan at the Bank, and a far greater proportion was always paid in Bank notes than in cash. In like manner, all sums issued by government, had uniformly a greater proportion of Bank paper than of cash. The Bank, therefore, could never answer in cash the whole of the demands that might be made on them in one day. Indeed, if the necessity of the measure now proposed did at all exist to adopt the clause proposed

would be doing away with one breath what they were enacting with the other.

Mr. *Fox* could conceive nothing more alarming than what had just fallen from the right hon. gentleman. Nothing could be more fallacious than the arguments urged on this subject: they led to every species of fraud. It had been said to be the custom of government principally to pay in notes. But in what kind of notes? In notes immediately convertible into cash. But were Bank notes now convertible, into specie on demand? Surely not. Therefore no resemblance could exist between what they now were to be, and what they were formerly. The transactions of the Bank of England may fairly be compared with those of a private bank. If a private banker issues notes on proper grounds, and with a due proportion of specie to answer the amount, the transaction is certainly not unlawful; but if he issues beyond that due proportion of cash, and without a corresponding security in effects, then the transaction is stigmatized as fraudulent. Should a demand be made unexpectedly on him, for more than he is able to pay in specie, what then would be his conduct? He must stop payment for a time, call in his debts, and convert his effects into cash; and when the demands on him were satisfied, then he might open business anew. But this, it was said, should not be applied to the Bank of England. And why? Because state necessity requires, that they should reserve what specie they may still possess, for exigencies of government! If that be the case, do not then deny that you defraud the public creditor. Give the transaction the term it is entitled to. No good can be derived from glossing it over with specious words. A considerable portion of a loan may be paid in Bank notes, by those who have associated together, from a willingness to receive them, and with a view to promote their acceptance by others: but it may not equally suit others to receive them in this manner. Let such, therefore, be paid in specie; and under this limitation the clause cannot be justly said to render the proposed restriction superfluous and nugatory. Mr. *Hume* had predicted, that as soon as the exigencies of the state should compel government to lay violent hands on the cash of the Bank, in breach of faith, and to the detriment of the public creditor, then the credit of the country would be no more. The government, not the Bank, was the debtor, and the

refusal of payment was the act, not of the Bank, but of the government.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, that what had happened to the public creditor, in his not having the payment of his debt in specie, was undoubtedly a fraud upon him; it was certainly a fraud not to pay a man in gold and silver, when gold and silver were due to him. But though he said this, he was ready to admit, that, in a great country like this, fraud itself was a thing to be submitted to, if it was impossible for the state to avoid it; or, in other words, necessity, if it was an absolute one, was an answer for any thing that could happen. But the question now was, what was prudent to be done? Suppose the restriction upon the Bank only to continue for a month, he believed many people would be discontented; but he did not believe that the evil would be great, for that the mass of the people would not object to it. The objection he had to the bill was to him a decisive one. The Bank should be allowed to pay one day or other in specie; but, by this bill, it did not appear that they were ever to do so. Should the day to which the operation of the bill was to continue be at a moderate distance, the panic which created the run upon the Bank would cease, and every thing would go on as usual. What bullion and specie there was in the Bank now, ought to be secured there for a while, but not for ever. Nobody imagined that the Bank was to be shut up for ever as to the issuing of specie for paper; and that was the reason why the paper was now so current. Therefore a clause to continue that currency a short time should be inserted in the bill; after which the Bank should be allowed to pay in specie. The great thing to be considered in this business was, the limitation of time, during which the Bank was to be restrained from paying in money. At present there was no time fixed; and all that appeared to refer to that subject was a clause at the end of the bill, which gave power to parliament to alter or amend it in the course of the session. That appeared to him to be much too indefinite. There should be a period fixed, at which the restriction should cease. If, after that time, it should appear that the Bank could not go on, let them give up like other companies who were unable to pay the demands upon them. It appeared to him to be better that a time should be fixed, at which the Bank should pay in money,

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even if it should be a long one, than that it should be indefinite; for so it would be, if there was only a clause in the bill to empower parliament to alter the period as occasion should require. That was much too vague a thing to satisfy the holders of Bank paper. The minister deceived himself sadly if he thought he could, in this way, support the credit of any paper long. Paper that could not at any specific time be convertible into gold would soon depreciate. It was not to this country only that we were to look for the effect which this measure would have. We should turn our eyes to *Hamburgh* and to other places, and see what effect this was to have on the price of foreign articles, on which so much of our trade and commerce depended.

The *Attorney General* thought that parliament could not at this moment prudently fix the duration of the restriction upon the Bank. The House might, by limiting the time now, place themselves in a very distressing situation; for if it should happen, after the House had limited the time, that the monied world should be restored to its former state before that time expired, the House would have no power to put an end to the restriction before the time limited by the bill, although the cause of it had ceased. He apprehended that the creditors of the Bank, he meant the proprietors of stock and the claimants of dividends upon stock, should not, in case of public exigency, call for payment in specie, any more than any other creditors upon a private banker. Any man having a claim upon another, might demand payment of the amount in money. Generally speaking, however, creditors had been satisfied with the payment of their demands in Bank bills. In the case of a private banker, persons who were his customers deposited money with him for the convenience of their own concerns. They did so, certainly, on the faith that he would always have a due proportion of cash in his possession to answer any drafts, from day to day, they should draw upon him: but he knew very well, if all his creditors were to come upon him at once, that he could not have cash in possession sufficient to answer them all; for they must all know that the profits of his business consisted in laying out at interest and in advantageous commerce a great portion of their property deposited in his hands. Was it not, then, a monstrous position to lay down, that, if a private banker could

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not answer at any one time the demands of his creditors, should they all come upon him, the Bank should be expected to do so? When gentlemen talked of the legal payment of debts, they did not consider the extent to which that might be carried. If a man owed him money, and offered him guineas in payment, he did not know that he made good the strict legal obligation he was under; but if a banker was called upon by all his customers to make good at once in specie the whole of their demands, what was he to do? He certainly could not satisfy them. He would say, "Here are my funds; look at the value of them; it is true they are not money, but they are convertible into money; you must have known, that if you all came upon me at once, I could not pay all in money." What would the creditors of such a banker say? they were not cruel, obdurate, and foolish, they would say, "It is not for your interest, not for ours, to distress you; cash, we know, cannot be found immediately; we see your funds are quite sufficient to answer our claims, and therefore we will give you time." Precisely so was the case with respect to the Bank; every person who took a Bank note knew that the Bank was not in a situation to give cash for every bank note, supposing every one to be presented for payment in cash at one time; and this, to a certain extent had been the case, in the instance which created the necessity of the present bill. What should the House of Commons do in such a case? Why, precisely what the House did: they inquired into the solidity of the Bank, and verified the fact, that it was abundantly wealthy.—The right hon. gentleman had observed, that the value of bank notes consisted in the consciousness that they were, at the will of the holder, convertible into money. He admitted it. But then the right hon. gentleman should recollect, that there was a great difference between the case of any banker or private individual, and that of the Bank of England, even in the facility of turning their property to specie. The property of the Bank was not convertible into specie without much time. The public never sufficiently understood this matter, and it was the duty of the House that day to stem the torrent of popular prejudice upon this matter, and to allow the Bank a reasonable time to get out of the difficulty with which it was now unfortunately, and he believed, unavoidably embarrassed.

Mr. Fox said, that the learned gentleman was of opinion, that if the Bank stopped payment under certain circumstances, they should not be stigmatised with the charge of having broken their faith, provided it appeared that the failure was unavoidable. In that statement he agreed with him. He agreed with him also in his statement of the possible case of a private banker, that if all his creditors came upon him at once, and demanded payment in cash, that he could not possibly comply with such demands, and that their forbearance would be laudable. But the learned gentleman omitted one material distinction between the private banker, and that of the Bank of England: if a private banker was in the hands of creditors whom he could not pay, he could not defend himself by law at any time when his creditors chose to call upon him for payment of their demands: he must satisfy them when they should think fit to call upon him, and therefore they were likely to see their interest in having a tender regard for his. But was this the case with the Bank of England? By no means; for by this bill the Bank were to be indemnified against the effect of having refused to pay their debts: and that which would be punishable by law as a breach of faith in a private banker, would not be punishable in the Bank of England.—But the learned gentleman seemed to intimate that the Bank would have specie enough in a certain time. Now, he could not conceive that, if there was a disproportion at this moment between specie and paper, the issue of a greater quantity of paper would diminish the evil. Suppose government were to pay him a debt in specie, that was to say, in bad guineas of the value only of 19s. each; why then, for these bad guineas he could get 19s. at any time, and therefore they would have a fixed value, so that he should know the amount of his loss; but if the paper of the Bank should be depreciated, he would never be able to ascertain that loss, because it might vary from day to day. No comparison could ever be made between the precious metals and paper in a state of depreciation. He wished that gentlemen, instead of amusing them with new terms of "circulating medium" and the like, had shown an instance, ancient or modern, in which paper, when forced into circulation by the authority of the state, had been received in the same manner as gold and

silver. The thing was impossible; for the value of paper must always be dependent on the possibility of converting it into silver and gold. He agreed, that the duration of the bill should be a short one. He knew not whether the duration of the bill was intended to be for three weeks, or for three or six months; but this he knew, that the longer the duration, the greater our difficulty would be, and he must be a sanguine man, indeed, if he thought the country would not be ruined in its credit, if this bill continued for six or eight months. There were some persons who confessed that this evil could not be removed during the war. He agreed with them: but he doubted whether it could be removed even in peace, unless that desirable event should take place very soon. Every hour that it was delayed diminished our chance of removing the calamity. If we had not peace in the spring of 1797, what should we say in the autumn? This was a question which did not depend on the taking of a town, or a fortress. An enumeration of many successes in that respect would be of no avail. This was a time in which we should not conceal any thing from the public. A new loan of several millions would be speedily wanted, which certainly would not tend to improve the situation of our paper credit. He could not bring himself to state the circumstances of the country without the most painful anxiety. It was now on the brink of a dreadful precipice, and one false step might throw it into a gulph out of which it could never rise.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, that the great mischief of the present stoppage was its effect on paper credit, which had been the means of our commercial pre-eminence; and such was the importance of preserving it, that, in his opinion, immediate means should be devised of restoring it to its former state. That this was possible, he had no doubt. Nay he himself was possessed of a plan by which this interdiction on the Bank might be removed within a month: it required energy and resolution; but with these it would not fail of success. The plan now before them was inadequate to its purpose, and, like all similar schemes, would inevitably occasion the destruction of those who brought it forward.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that it was a delicate matter for any man to state with any degree of confidence, the precise time for limiting the intended restriction on the Bank; for it was impossible to foresee

the exact period at which the necessity for its continuance would cease. However earnest gentlemen might be on that point, a cause which had produced so great an effect could not be removed in so short a time as their desires might induce them to expect. A limitation of three months seemed advisable, and the 24th of June appeared to him a proper period. Yet he did not mention that as the precise and settled time for the duration of the measure. An hon. baronet had assured gentlemen, that he was in possession of a sure method to remove the restriction in one month; but he had not thought proper to disclose the particular measures which were to accomplish that very desirable end. The remedy could not take place instantaneously, but must be the result of gradual investigation and progressive improvement.—With respect to the propositions thrown out, of reducing the amount of notes in circulation, it was a subject on which he had not been able to form any judgment. But when he reviewed the arguments adduced by a right hon. gentleman, a sudden diminution of the circulating medium decisively appeared to be the result of them. As so much had been said on the nature of a circulating medium, he thought it necessary to notice that he did not for his own part take it to be of that empirical kind which had been generally described. It appeared to him to consist in any thing that answered the great purposes of trade and commerce, whether in specie, paper, or any other term that might be used. The right hon. gentleman admitted that a sudden diminution of the circulating medium would destroy the commerce of the country. But he also appeared to have stated, that if the effects of the Bank were converted into cash, and the claims of the public creditors satisfied, then the House would put themselves in the situation of keeping their faith. But that position (said Mr. Pitt) I positively deny. The most effectual way to keep our faith cannot be separated from the commerce, the manufactures, and the activity of the country. It is by preserving these, that we can alone give energy to public credit. It is by giving stability to the Bank, in a manner directly opposite to that proposed by the right hon. gentleman, that we can alone give life to trade, draw into circulation the specie hoarded up at home, and bring back the money which has been remitted to foreign countries. On such a

conduct depends the real security of the public creditors, and not on the measure suggested, of converting into cash the assets of the Bank, which, however temporary in its relief, would ultimately plunge the nation in the deepest distress, and completely ruin the credit of the country. The right hon. gentleman might as well argue, that to destroy the source and means of commerce would restore credit and remove every difficulty. Such a proceeding would, indeed, make an incurable wound in our dearest interests. But, Sir, that is not all; the right hon. gentleman's plan looks to the reduction of paper, but not to the increase of specie; and how would the nation be bettered by it? The outstanding debts of the Bank might, I grant, be paid by it; but it totally deprives the public creditor of any chance in our future prosperity; for the Bank would just have enough to discharge the claims which might be brought against it, and we should necessarily be left without any resource to which our commerce, our manufactures, or the spirit of national enterprise, could look for support, vigour, and extension. It does not, therefore, seem to me to be the true road for us to pursue, in endeavouring to maintain the activity of our internal traffic, and the success of our external commercial designs, with which public credit is so materially connected. We should hope that by encouraging them in adopting means consistent with their support, we have the best chance of bringing specie and bullion into the Bank, and restoring to the country the full circulation of money.—He considered a prudent increase of Bank notes at the present moment as the most effectual means of producing essential benefit, and which could be easily reduced at a future period. That was the most rational way of shortening the duration of the necessity. Yet if any gentleman could state to the committee a better plan, he would gladly give his assent to it.

Mr. Fox said, he had no particular objection to the use of the term circulating medium, except that he preferred old terms to new; but he must aver, that the doctrine of the right hon. gentleman was fundamentally erroneous, and must be so if the first and eternal principles by which all circulation was governed were true. According to his doctrine, it would be the surest way of putting an end to the present dilemma, if paper were to be extended

beyond the proportion of specie, rather than diminished; and by this he speciously said, that commerce was to be maintained, industry promoted, and all the sources of our wealth to be fed. It was not declamation, however showy, that would change the everlasting nature of things. Suppose that, on a basis of one million of specie, there was an issue of only one million of notes, would it be a question, that these notes would be in more estimation than if it were known that two, three, or more millions were to be issued? According to the right hon. gentleman, however, notes were to be valuable in proportion to their quantity, and as they exceeded the solidity of the foundation upon which they were issued—a proposition which must be false if the principles of credit be true. In talking of a circulating medium, gentlemen got into errors by supposing that paper was a circulating medium. It was no such thing. The circulating mediums were the precious metals, and the paper that used so freely to circulate, flowed from the opinion the public had of the facility and certainty with which that paper could be converted into the precious metals. In case of barter, the precious metals were taken as a circulating medium in preference to any thing else, as being a material of substantial value in all countries, and upon which there was a general convention of mankind; but to substitute paper as a circulating medium, required that it should either be done by convention or by force. If by convention of any part of the kingdom, it still did nothing, because the rest of the world were not parties thereto; and if done by force, we must incur the penalties which a forced circulation of paper had brought upon every country that had adopted the expedient. The use of paper, then, must always be secondary to the precious metals, must flow from credit, and credit must in its nature arise out of the opinion that the paper was issued in due and discreet proportion to the fund of specie. But to say that paper differed from the nature of every thing else, and that it was valuable in proportion as it was plentiful, and not as it was rare, and that the abundance of paper would incline people not to hoard guineas, but would induce them to carry them to the Bank, were propositions so inconsistent with sound reasoning, that he was ashamed of calling up principles, which were as clear as the simplest proposition of mathematics,

Sir *John Sinclair* was happy to hear what had fallen from sir *W. Pulteney*, respecting his confidence in a plan which might bring matters to a settlement in a short time. He had himself a paper in his hand, which he meant hereafter to submit to the consideration of the House on this subject. He condemned the intention to force the public creditors to take notes in payment of their dividends. There were also other public creditors who had not been mentioned, but who, he supposed, were to be put by the bill in this same predicament. He meant those who held stock of the South Sea and East India company.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, he felt a mixture of surprise and hope at the speeches of the two hon. baronets. Their assertion, that there were means so strongly and speedily efficacious, must be very flattering to the House and the public, but why send away the plans to another committee? Why not propose them to-night? He longed to congratulate the House on such a notable discovery. There was not worse policy than to think that by decreasing the paper, the difficulty would be decreased also. In order to correct the evil, gold must be brought into circulation, either from foreign countries, or private hordes: yet the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox) would adopt that very measure which he himself allowed would have a tendency to injure commerce, and thereby dry up that source of relief. Gentlemen did not consider how much of this distress arose from the very nature of our commercial dealings. The credit we gave was one year, eighteen months, or two years, while we paid at six months; so that in the progressive increase of trade it was some time before the balance flowed in. The bad effects were past—the good were yet to come. As to discounting, it did not increase the paper in circulation: for the bills discounted were paid when due in bank bills, which kept the quantity in circulation nearly the same.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, he did not speak in that House, or elsewhere, without reflection. He was no enthusiast, nor did he ever cant about a thing which he did not understand. He sincerely believed that his plan was calculated to restore the credit of circulation. He perfectly agreed with Mr. Fox. His ideas upon credit were eternal truths. It was impossible to keep up the value of paper but

by credit founded on the opinion that it was limited in its quantity, and was well proportioned to its basis. All the chimeras of the chancellor of the exchequer would deceive himself, and the country.

The clause, with the amendment, was adopted.

March 24. The House went again into a committee on the bill. On the exception contained in the clause for the purpose of securing the payment of the army and navy,

Mr. *Fox* said, that though the necessity of the times induced him not to oppose this bill, there were many parts of it censurable; but none so much as this provision in favour of the army and navy. He conceived, that in the eye of strict justice and right, and by the law of the land, the public creditor was the object in whose favour any exception from the restrictions of the bill, should be first made. The demands of the army and navy, when compared with the demands of the creditors to whom the public faith was plighted were objects of inferior consideration.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that some instances must be admitted as exceptions to the restriction; and surely from the very nature of the engagements made by law with the army and navy, they obviously stood foremost as objects of exception.

Mr. *Whitbread* allowed there was some reason in the argument, as far as it related to the navy; but why should the soldier be paid in cash in preference to the artificer? Why? the reason was that the former had arms in his hand, and the latter had not. Did the right hon. gentleman mean by conciliating the military to keep down the rest of the people? Did he mean to say “I will take cash from you the stock-holder, and give it to those who will punish you if you murmur?” He wanted to place all the specie of the country at the command of government. He had already had in contemplation a forced loan; and, perhaps, to procure cash, he would resort to domiciliary visits. Would the Bank have the power of resisting any order of council when issued?

Mr. *Pitt* said, it was something singular for the hon. gentleman to assume, that the public safety had no interest in the payment of the army. Still more extraordinary was the insinuation, that government paid the army, not for the purposes of national defence, but for that of violat-

ing the law, and oppressing the subject. The law enacted, that an army should be kept. Would the hon gentleman say, that public safety or individual security, was better protected by the circumstance of a disbanded army, with arms and without pay? As friends to order were those the principles which gentlemen would wish to avow? For public and constitutional purposes, the measure as it stood in the bill was most salutary.

Mr. *Fox* observed, that the minister had put it to those who sat opposite to him, whether, as friends to order, they would object to the principle of paying the army and navy in specie? He thought certainly, that the mischief of objecting to that principle would be great, but that the mischief of paying the army and navy in specie, in preference to the public creditor, would be much greater; and this opinion was strengthened by what he had just heard. If such was to be the case, not only public credit, but the very foundations upon which it stood would be destroyed. "But had the public safety," said the minister, "no interest in paying an army which the law had enabled government to keep on foot for the public service? To this he should reply, that the law had enabled government to pay them only after they had paid the public creditor. But now came the mischievous part of the argument, which destroyed the very foundation upon which public credit rested. The right hon. gentleman had alluded to the disorders that would result from a disbanded army. Would the public creditor, he had said, be safer—would the constitution, would the laws, would the labourer be safer,—from the circumstance of a disbanded army, with arms in their hands, and without pay? The answer was plain—the law had declared otherwise: the law had determined that the public creditor should be paid in the first instance, and the militia after the public creditor. But this argument of the minister's would apply not to the failure of specie, but to the deficiency of ways and means. Suppose the ways and means to be inadequate—the right hon. gentleman, if he adhered to this mode of reasoning, must be prepared in that case to say, "stop the payments to the public creditor! pay him 3 per cent. instead of 5." He might advance in his justification, that it was necessary to pay the army in order to ensure the safety of the public creditor. And here came the mischief of

a tax upon the funds. If the public creditor's safety depended upon the army being paid, upon what principle (should the ways and means be inadequate), could it be said that the public debt ought not to be postponed to pay them? And in that case, what security would the public creditor have that he would ever be paid by a government having such an army at their command? The constitution had declared, that the means should be provided for paying the public creditor first. That the mischief of being without an army in time of war would be great, he allowed; that it would be great to be without one in time of peace, he doubted. But the right hon. gentleman had been putting extreme cases. For his own part he was of opinion, that the protecting of public credit was a more likely way to produce an army, than the protecting of an army was to produce public credit; and that if the present measure lasted more than two months, the consequences would be fatal.

Mr. *Pitt* put it to the candour of the House, whether, if the legislature thought it necessary to keep an army for foreign defence, and he thought that army should be paid in specie, for domestic safety, it must necessarily be for sinister purposes? If the House acted on the principles of the right hon. gentleman, they would frustrate what they professed to have in view—they would "keep the word of promise to the ear, and break it to the sense." The whole measure was intended merely to give time for the public resources to act, and, in the mean time, it was the duty of every man to adopt every measure that could preserve order, and maintain public security.

Mr. *Sheridan* considered the speech of the chancellor of the exchequer, as a direct confession of the establishment of a military government. What would the army say, when they heard the right hon. gentleman's arguments? They would say this: the chancellor of the exchequer has avowed, that he dares not refuse us, because we have arms in our hands." What was this but acknowledging that the country was under a despotic government? The soldiers would next insist upon the continuance of their allowance of bread; they would make fresh demands, and enforce them, by coming down to the House with arms in their hands. To the clause in question he objected and wished to move that the Treasury should have

the power of drawing upon the Bank for specie, only for the payment of the army and navy abroad.

Sir *M. Le Fleming*, said that the payment of the army was made in such trifling sums, that paper could not possibly be used in it. The speech of the hon. gentleman was shamefully inflammatory, and intended merely to work up the minds of the labouring poor to discontent and resentment against the government.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, there was more made of this matter, on both sides, than it warranted or required. The soldiers were always paid in change, which was to be had in the places where they were quartered, and not from the Bank. The soldiers must lay out all they got, and by that means the change returned back again into the hands that it came from. He thought it should be left on the same footing as in the navy.

Mr. *Whitbread* observed, that taking the argument of the chancellor of the exchequer on the subject of paying the army in cash, whilst the manufacturer and labourer were obliged to accept notes, and coupling it with the general conduct of ministers, and in particular with the open declaration of one right hon. gentleman (Mr. Windham) that "it might be necessary to use a vigour beyond the law," the whole appeared to him extremely alarming. He could not help thinking that they had something in contemplation which was wholly unconstitutional.

Mr. *Fox* said, that after the alarming manner in which the chancellor of the exchequer had argued, in justification of the measure of paying the army in cash, and after the very unconstitutional measures which ministers had shewn themselves disposed to pursue, he was by no means easy, to see them possess such a dreadful engine of power in their hands as an army thus paid, in case their apprehensions and fears for their own personal safety should lead them to call out that army to resist internal commotions.

Mr. *Sheridan* hoped the time was not far off when he should see the chancellor of the exchequer held up as the author of all the fatal calamities which had befallen the country, and made solely responsible for them.

The clause was then agreed to.—The clause for fixing the duration of the restriction being read,

Mr. *Pitt* allowed, that as short a time as possible should be fixed, but still it was

necessary to allow so much as might give the Bank an opportunity, to pay with such effect, as to ensure a continuance of their doing so, when once they began again to pay in specie. Much might be expected in time to be brought in, from the country, and much from abroad. He was at a loss what time to propose; but, in order to give every probable scope to the Bank, he thought the time ought not to be shorter than the 24th of June next, and would move that the blank be filled up with that day.

Sir *W. Pulteney* was of opinion that the longer the bill was allowed to operate, the worse the condition of the Bank would become. He had a plan in his pocket which he was confident would save the country, if executed in time. He thought the debate should be adjourned, in order to give gentlemen an opportunity of considering the subject coolly and deliberately. The period of the bill ought not to extend longer than a month, but in the mean time he wished the debate on the clause to be adjourned till Wednesday next.

Mr. *Ellison* was averse to all theories, and wished to hear plain sense and plain facts. He entreated the hon. baronet to bring forward the panacea which he said he possessed, and which, he trusted, would prove an effectual remedy for the present distresses of the country.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, that he had no mystery about the remedy he had to propose, it was no panacea, no nostrum, but what men of experience in financial affairs might easily devise. It was in vain to propose his plan at present; for if the bill passed with its clauses, such as they now stood, every remedy that could be proposed would be unavailing. He was now ready to propose his plan, if the nature of the debate and the hour of the night would permit it.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the hon. baronet was the best judge when he should produce his intended plan. He was anxious to hear what it was, as he was sure that nothing but what was solid and salutary could come from so distinguished a financier. Though he was eager that no delay should intervene, yet he would willingly postpone the business for a short time, if then the result of the hon. baronet's plan could be unfolded to the House.

Mr. *Fox* said, that if the clause was pressed to a decision, he must certainly oppose it, for he saw no use in a long

period. He would therefore move that instead of the "24th of June," the "1st of May," should stand in the clause.

Mr. *Pitt* opposed the amendment, because he thought no grounds had been laid before the House to induce them to agree to a shorter period. By agreeing to the day he had proposed, the House would not put it out of their power to repeal the bill, if any fortunate events rendered that possible before the 24th of June, for there was a clause to that effect.

Mr. *Sheridan* could not agree with the hon. baronet, that the Bank never could pay again; on the contrary, he thought they might do so in much less time than that fixed by the chancellor of the exchequer, provided government paid as large a portion of their debt to the Bank, as he understood they meant to do. He made a fanciful allusion to the Bank, as an elderly lady in the city, of great credit and long standing, who had lately made a *faux pas* which was not altogether inexcusable. She had he said unfortunately fallen into bad company, and contracted too great an intimacy and connexion at the St. James's end of the town. The young gentleman, however, who had employed all his arts of soft persuasion to seduce this old lady, had so far shown his designs, that by timely breaking off the connexion, there might be hopes for the old gentlewoman once more regaining her credit and injured reputation. In order to facilitate this, he should support the amendment.

Mr. *Lubbock* said:—For my part, I have no idea of any real want of specie in the kingdom. I offered Mr. Newland to pay into the Bank 10,000 guineas, on condition he would repay the same sum in specie if I required it; an offer which I really did not think he would have refused; and at the same time I observed to him, that I knew those who would pay him, in the course of a few days, 50,000 guineas on the same terms. The time the Bank should open to pay again in specie, ought to be left to the judgment of the governor and directors, as the naming any certain day might be injurious to the country bankers, who would have those who held their notes calling on that day for their money; whereas, if the Bank began to pay in specie without such notice, all would go on smoothly. If three millions were added to their capital, it would enable the Bank to discount to a much larger amount, which would more than

accommodate the commercial world; and I would venture to be d——d if such a sum would not be subscribed in twenty-four hours: this would put all to rights.

Mr. *Dent* thought the connexion between the government and the Bank ought to be prevented, and that the debt of eleven million should be discharged. This would go a great way to restore public credit.

The committee divided on Mr. Fox's Amendment: Ayes, 88; Noes, 218.

March 27. The report of the bill being brought up, and it appearing that several clauses were intended to be offered to the said bill, it was resolved, that the bill should be recommitted with respect to the said clauses. The House having resolved itself into the committee,

Mr. *Pitt* proposed his first clause, "That the collectors of the public revenue, &c. shall receive in payment bank notes, &c. during the continuance of the restriction on the Bank not to issue cash, &c." This being agreed to, Mr. *Pitt* said, he should as concisely explain the substance of the clause which he was about to offer. It had reference to the situation of persons who might offer, in payment of their debts, bank notes, and might have no means of paying their debts in cash. The clause did not go the length of making bank notes a legal tender, nor of taking away the power of the creditor to pursue, in the course of legal process, means to obtain payment of his demand in cash. The whole substance of the clause was this: if any man offered a bank note in payment of a demand that offer should do away the effect of a personal arrest in the first instance. The other process of the law should take its course to the attainment of judgment, as if this clause had never been projected, in the same manner as when any man sues for his debt without arresting the person of his debtor. It only saved the holder of a bank note from the inconvenience of giving bail to an action upon depositing the bank note. The condition of the creditor would be this: that the bank note shall stand as a security for his demand until he shall, in due course of law, obtain his judgment. When we considered the general feeling which had gone abroad, and which was manifested by the resolutions of different opulent societies to receive bank notes as cash in payment, this deposit would be a good security to the cre-

ditor in the course of his legal process, without binding him to take it after he shall have obtained his judgment for his debt.

Mr. *Fox* did not rise to object to this clause. He was not one of those who admired the policy of an arrest in the first instance, in order to obtain payment of a demand. It must be obvious to the committee, that formerly when men received in payment of their demands a bank note, they received that sort of paper for which, when they pleased, they might have money. This new regulation was leaving to a man no choice as to the mode in which he was to be paid, or even in which he was to have security for the payment of his demand. This was a case for which, perhaps, there was no remedy, and we were left only in a condition to lament it. If one man had a demand upon another for 1,000*l.* and he proceeded against him, he could, under this clause, have no other security than that of a bank note; a very good security he hoped it would be; but, then, if he took it, and owed another the same sum, and that other did not choose to take it, he must incur the penalty which would attend the litigation of that demand. All this was a serious evil to every person who should have the misfortune to be involved in it. He wished the committee to consider the case fully, for it was impossible to foresee what effect the whole of these circumstances might ultimately have upon public credit. We were brought into a situation in which difficulties would every day be more numerous, and our remedies fewer and fewer. What conclusion did he draw from all this? That we should fix, for the whole of the operation of this bill, as short a duration as possible.

Mr. *Hussey* was glad that bank notes were not proposed to be made a legal tender, because the mischief of that would be obvious. Adam Smith said, that the funded debt of a nation was a source of capital, and in that view he also took it. He did not agree with those who talked of the necessity of increasing the circulating medium of a country, without considering the real wealth of that country. No medium, whether countenanced by government or not, was worth any thing, but as it was the representative of real wealth. Our object appeared to be that of aiding the circulation of valid paper, which was founded on a solid security, namely, the pledge of the national

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faith to the proprietor of the funds. He therefore proposed, that any man possessing 100*l.* in the 3 per cents, or any other sum, should have, to that amount, by applying at the Bank, an authentic document of the value of his property at the fair marketable price of it at the time of the application. This would enable any man to raise money upon the most solid security. By this, activity might be given to a capital of 400 millions of funded property.

Sir *F. Baring* doubted whether those who brought forward this bill understood the extent of the operation it would have. A vast mass of the circulating property in this country was applicable to the payment of foreign bills of exchange, for which the present bill was not at all adapted. What was a party to do on whom a foreign bill of exchange, payable in gold and silver, was drawn when that bill became due? If he had nothing but bank notes, his bill would be protested, and the credit of the party would be ruined. He saw no means by which this evil could be avoided but by making bank notes a legal tender.

Mr. *Dent* thought that Bank notes might be made a legal tender while the present suspension lasted. It also appeared to him that some measure should be adopted for limiting the number of Bank notes.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that with respect to making Bank notes a legal tender, it was almost a universal opinion in the House, that if it was possible to meet the present difficulty without taking that step, it ought to be done. Upon a subject of this sort, there was so much difficulty, and so much uncertainty, that no man could speak with great confidence upon it. But as long as the circulation rested upon paper taken by general consent, he thought it would not be advisable to have it taken by compulsion, which might have an injurious effect, and was at present superfluous. They had seen that, during the month which had elapsed since the suspension, paper had been willingly and universally received. The effects of this were so beneficial, that there was little reason to apprehend that the public would not endeavour to continue it until the suspension should be removed. He therefore hoped the hon. gentleman would not compel the House to discuss a question of that kind; because, at this moment, it would not only be useless but improper. With res-

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pect to the limitation of Bank notes, it would first be necessary to ascertain that the Bank had issued too many; but he did not understand that any idea of that sort was prevalent. The present difficulty had arisen, not from too great a number being in circulation, but too few. The bankers were perfectly satisfied with the clause before the committee, as it gave them as much security as they desired to have. To go farther now he thought would be imprudent.

Mr. *Fox* agreed, that the committee should not go to any length that was not necessary in forcing the circulation of paper; but as to Bank notes, he thought they could not be free from that sort of jealousy which attended the issuing them, when it was known that no cash was to be expected in exchange for them at the Bank until the expiration of the present bill. As to the time when the bill expired, and whether then cash would be had for them at the Bank, that was entirely matter of conjecture. The necessity which produced the first order in council might produce its continuance beyond the period of the present bill; and therefore upon the ground of public security there was nothing to rest upon. He must therefore repeat, that there never would be any security for the country until its credit should be restored. He had no difficulty in saying, that if it were possible for us to-morrow to have the choice whether we should get thirty or forty millions in specie, to enable the Bank to pay in cash all the notes that were issued, or to have no more specie than we have at present, but be able to restore public credit, he should prefer the restoration of public credit to the influx of such an immense quantity of wealth. That restoration of credit was not to be obtained by wealth, but by confidence.

Mr. *Pitt* rose only to make a short observation. As to making the suspension as short as possible, it was a point upon which there could not be two opinions. But the only point in dispute was, before they could attain that object, what system of measures they should adopt in order to accelerate it? They should not begin by deceiving the public, by holding out too short a period, which must create great disappointment.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—Sir; the chancellor of the exchequer has informed us, that the bankers are perfectly satisfied with the present clause, which in case of a re-

fusal to discharge their notes in specie, protects them in the first instance, from personal arrest. I am not inclined to dispute the veracity of the right hon. gentleman; but I must say, that the conduct of the bankers fills me with astonishment. Notwithstanding this clause, they are liable for their inability to pay in specie, brought upon them by the order of council, to action upon action; nay, they are at the mercy of every petty-fogging attorney, who may strike a docket against them, and work a commission of bankruptcy. If the bankers be satisfied with this exposed situation, it must be from a conviction that they have it not in their power to make it better. Nothing but a law, declaring bank notes to be legal tender of payment, can relieve the bankers and the trading part of the community from the hardships to which they are now subject; but the remedy would introduce worse evils than those it is intended to remove.

Alderman *Curtis* said, that the hon. gentleman was mistaken in supposing that a refusal to pay in specie was an act of bankruptcy.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, that he stood corrected. A refusal to pay in specie was not an act of bankruptcy, unless the party refusing should remain unbailed for two months. But, notwithstanding this mistake, his argument was still good; that bankers were not relieved from the risk of continual prosecutions; and it was most wonderful, therefore, that they should be contented with the clause.

Sir *F. Baring* was averse to all systems of speculation in paper money. Their fatal effects, he exemplified, by what had befallen the Ayr bank, where more paper was issued than the country required; and where it was no sooner issued, but it returned again to the Bank, till it fell to a discount of three or four per cent. As far, however, as the issuing of paper, to a certain extent, went to facilitate commercial accommodation, he was by no means inclined to oppose it.

Mr. *Pitt* contended, that the issuing of paper, if restrained within due limits, was productive of the best advantages; but more should not be issued than the country required; thus, the example of the Ayr bank did not apply. The only limits that ought to circumscribe the accommodation of the Bank, were, in his opinion, the extent of the scale of commerce, and the nature of the securities on which ac-

commodations should be granted. The issue should, therefore, be restricted only within the capital of the Bank, and on solid security.

Mr. Fox said, that he would now move the clause, of which he gave notice the other night, respecting the issuing of money from the Bank for the uses of government, in its foreign relations. He would not tie it down by any restrictive qualifications, leaving it to the right hon. gentleman to propose such qualifications as to him should appear necessary and proper. He then moved a clause to the following effect: "That it shall not be lawful for the Bank to issue any cash by way of loan to government, for any foreign power, pending the operation of the restriction now laid on the Bank by the late minute of council."

Mr. Pitt said, that he felt no objection to the principle of the clause: it was his wish, that the advances of the Bank should be reduced rather than increased, during its present state of embarrassment. But, should the clause now proposed be admitted, without any qualification or exception, very material inconvenience might arise to the public service from government being suddenly deprived of the power of raising money on exchequer bills. There should, therefore, be some exception introduced into the clause, conferring a power of issuing money to a limited amount, suppose 600,000*l.*, and that only on the credit of the exchequer bills already authorized by a vote of parliament.

The clause so amended was agreed to.

Mr. Nicholls moved for leave to bring up a clause for limiting the amount of the debts which the Bank might be allowed to contract during the continuance of the bill. He said that, antecedent to the failure of the Bank there was a natural limitation to the issue of Bank bills, viz. that if more were issued than were wanted for the purposes of commercial intercourse, the holders of the bills could carry them in and demand cash. The present bill would take away this natural restriction. it was therefore necessary to substitute some positive restriction. To what sum the Bank should be restricted, he did not himself mean to suggest. He had left the blank to be filled up by the chancellor of the exchequer; and if the sum which might be suggested by him was not very much out of proportion, he would acquiesce in it. If the bill

passed without such restriction, the Bank would be converted into a mint, which might coin bills to any amount. The chancellor of the exchequer had expressed his hopes, that the bill would be of short duration. It was not the decision of that House that it should terminate on the 24th of June which could fix a period to the duration of the bill. When the bill was once passed, it must continue until the Bank could meet the demands of its creditors with cash; and to enable them to meet the demands of their creditors, it was necessary to restrain them from increasing the amount of their debts. It had been said, that the Bank would make a moderate use of the unlimited power entrusted to them. The French government had at first made a moderate use of the power of issuing assignats; but their necessities soon compelled them to issue them with profusion.

Mr. Pitt objected to the clause as a matter already discussed, and wished it to be postponed till the report of the secret committee now sitting should be before the House.

Mr. Nicholls said, it was true that the chancellor of the exchequer had consented to a limitation of the open and direct loans from the Bank to government, but it was still possible that the minister might obtain money from the Bank covertly and indirectly. The minister might open a loan, and the minister's friends might fill that loan, relying that through the minister's influence, they should obtain money from the Bank, either on the discount of bills, or by a pledge of their scrip.

Mr. S. Thornton said, it was impossible to sit and hear such insinuations. He asserted that no minister, nor any authority on earth, ever had or ever should control the conduct of the directors of the Bank in giving accommodation to individual merchants by way of discount. The direct contrary was the fact. The directors had ever maintained the utmost independence in the matter, and he was persuaded they would ever do so in regard to the limitation proposed by the clause. He argued, that it would be wholly unnecessary, because the directors were the best judges to what extent their issue of paper should be made, which must be regulated by prudence; inasmuch as they would have to discharge it in specie whenever the present restriction should be removed, which was fixed but for a short time.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that assignats were issued as a mere engine of finance: the reverse was the case here: for the issue was restrained by the very last clause, during the continuance of the present bill.

Mr. *Nicholls* said, that however the hon. director might be hurt with the observation, it was known that the discounts at the Bank were a matter of favour. The influence of the minister with the directors was a matter which could not be denied.

Mr. *Fox* said, that however short the present operation of the bill might be, it must be co-extensive with the necessity; and therefore, in case the necessity for restraining the payment in specie continued beyond the 24th of June, the bill must be renewed. After the late discredit of the Bank, the directors were not the most proper persons to judge of the limitation. The Bank might not hitherto have discounted bills of individuals on the recommendation of government; but, after what they had seen, men must shut their eyes wilfully if they did not know that the recommendation of government might have great weight.

The Clause was negatived.

March 31. On the motion of Mr. *Pitt*, the House went again into a committee on the Bill.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that after a great deal of intercourse upon this subject, with the Bank directors, he was inclined to believe, that if permission were given to persons to pay money into the bank, and to receive, upon demand, part in cash, and a proportion in paper, it would have a tendency to accumulate large sums in the Bank. Upon this general principle, he should propose this clause; the purport of which was, to enable those persons who deposited cash in the Bank, to draw out three-fourths in specie, and the remainder in notes, during the continuance of the restriction.

Mr. *Fox* said, he could not consent to the passing of this clause. The only principle on which the order of council, the obedience of the Bank to that order, and the bill of which this was proposed to be a clause, was grounded, was the absolute necessity of the case. Such a principle was in itself of a nature that could not be limited; and if in the single instance alluded to, it was sufficient to justify the breach of the most solemn engagements, he wished to know what provision it was possible for parliament to make that might not be broken under the same plea? If

the same difficulties should arise, the exigencies of the state might make it necessary, under a new alarm, to adopt the same measures, and in a similar manner to seize on the money hereafter deposited, as on that lying in the Bank on the 25th of February. It was for this reason, and because he was averse to decoy men into such a difficulty, that he opposed the clause. He could never be persuaded, that the creditors of the Bank, under this clause, would be safer than those before the 25th of February; for it was a moral truth, that a promise was never better for being repeated, nor increased in value by an act of parliament. The laws and the faith of the legislature already passed had been broken, and the House could hardly hope that another act of parliament would add to their security. If it should be said, that the cash would lie untouched in the Bank, and not be applied to any use whatever, that would avail but little: there was, in the first place, no security for it: and if it was to be so, money lying useless could not tend to accelerate the period when the necessity for restriction would expire. But even if it was to be attended with some partial benefit, he did not like that the House, while they were violating their own guarantee and laws, should pretend that the faith of an act of parliament was sufficient security to decoy more money into the Bank. He had heard this measure was to come from the Bank; and he conceived it would more properly have come from some of them than from ministers. He would not agree to take the chancellor of the exchequer as the channel of information from the Bank, particularly as there were many of the Bank directors members of the House; but let the measure come from whom it would, he would oppose it.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the first ground of opposition the right hon. gentleman had taken was, the danger that, as necessity had compelled a suspension of payment of cash on the 25th of February, necessity might again compel them to adopt the same measure as to cash hereafter to be lodged under the faith of this clause. To this he had the plain and obvious answer, that if there was any danger, there was no compulsion; and the individuals being left to their own voluntary inclination, might estimate the danger, and act upon their own opinions. The right hon. gentleman had said, there was danger that power might be exercised as before;

but surely, in considering a question of this kind, the House were not to look to what was merely possible. To stop payment by an exertion of power, had always been possible; but they were not therefore to look to that possibility, and put it in the scale against well-founded principle—but rather to consider whether the circumstances led to an opinion that a similar stoppage was so probable as to render it unwise and unfair in parliament to suffer individuals, if they chose it, to deposit their money in the Bank, and leave the Bank and them to exercise a discretion concerning it, which, at all events, could do no injury, and might, more than probably would, lead to the restoration of cash payments at the Bank.—It must surely be superfluous to repeat, that the stoppage of cash payments at the Bank was not adopted because the Bank was likely at once to want cash, but because there was well-grounded reason to conclude, that if it was left subject to the unusual drain which had been caused by the alarm spread throughout the country, and was increasing with daily accelerated rapidity, there would soon have been so little cash left, as not to leave enough even for a short demand for public exigencies. The House, however, were to know, that they had proceeded in a manner directly contrary to the supposition of the right hon. gentleman; for there was not a single shilling taken for public purposes, and a little which remained in the exchequer had served for the urgent emergencies of the state. Probably, then, the cash in the Bank on the 25th of February was not yet diminished: then, if more cash came in, it would go gradually to enable the Bank to open again and resume its operations by those slow and successive steps which would make a resumption safe.—On this point, he had consulted those who were most interested, and best qualified to give him information. He had conversed with the various members of the Bank, in their individual and in their corporate capacity, and their opinions were, that it would produce a great and salutary effect; for money which now lay hoarded, would, in that case, be thrown into circulation; as monied men who would otherwise circulate the very utmost extent of their probable wants, and deposit only the small remainder in the Bank, would now deposit all they might have over and above the lowest calculation they could make of their probable necessities. Thus it must hap-

pen, that though under the order of council of the 26th of February, the quantity of cash then in the Bank was locked up, yet the general principle of banking would be kept alive, and that cash kept as a separate hoard, from whatever might, under this clause, be deposited. In this way their payments would become rapid and considerable, and the Bank would be able to resume their operations.—The right hon. gentleman had said, that he would oppose this clause, because it was only a decoy to delude people into depositing money in the Bank. If by decoy the right hon. gentleman meant false pretence, he would only tell him, that those who were likely to be concerned, understood the nature of the business perfectly; and if to their own knowledge and self interest they added the right hon. gentleman's apprehensions, there was not the smallest danger that they would fail to act with sufficient caution. It appeared that the whole care, which the right hon. gentleman so laboriously exerted on this occasion, was only to prevent people having it in their discretion to do that which, if unrestrained they would willingly do. Did the right hon. gentleman mean sincerely that the Bank should ever resume its operation? Had he not himself frequently said, get all the money possible into the Bank? Did he hope that the Bank could again open without more money in it than they now had? If so, how were they to get it but by deposits, which he now resists? And if he was now against money being deposited by individuals, did he expect it to come from abroad? a source which the right hon. gentleman more than any other distrusted. On what ground did he then oppose the measure?

Mr. Fox was not satisfied with the reasons of the minister upon this subject. His object was, that credit should be restored. That did not depend upon promises and engagements, but upon the faithful performance of them. Besides, there was mischief in the practice of preferring one promise to another. The promise that was made to the public, prior to the 26th of February, had been violated, and was to continue to be violated during the continuance of this bill; but the promise made in the month of March was to be kept. This preference of one promise to another, was no more the way to restore credit to those who made it, than it was the way to preserve the beauty of a park to cut down a beau-

tiful tree full of bloom and vigour, for the purpose of planting another in its stead, under the hope that it would soon take the same root and possess the same vigour, as that which had been a hundred years in coming to its maturity. He thought that before parliament entered into any new promises or engagements, they should discharge their old ones.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the Bank and bankers agreed to this clause, although the Bank had not particularly desired it. There was nothing compulsory in the clause; but it was thought that it would be productive of benefit to the public, by causing money to flow more freely into the Bank. The right hon. gentleman had fortified his objections, by stating extreme cases, as if, because a positive engagement had once been suspended for a short limited time, in a case of necessity, and for the eventual public advantage, that therefore it could never be expected, that any future engagement would be fulfilled. In the present instance, the Bank was placed in a situation wherein they might be allowed to make payments on demand, without interfering with those circumstances which had prevented the former engagements from being regularly fulfilled.

Alderman *Curtis* supported the clause, being convinced that it would tend to restore public credit, and that when once the Bank was opened to receive gold, according to the proviso now under consideration, they would receive it in great abundance, as there was no real want of that metal.

Mr. *Tierney* could not bring himself to approve of this clause, not conceiving it to be founded on common honesty or common prudence. It was not necessary for the chancellor of the exchequer to say that this clause was at the desire of the Bank, nor to say it was at the desire of the bankers; for the latter would profit pretty handsomely by it, at the expense of their customers. He should be glad to see the worthy alderman who spoke last going to the Bank with 1,000 guineas, and refusing to pay one hundred in cash for the convenience of his customer. He asked, whether this was to be called common honesty? With respect to the prudence of the measure, he would state this case; a banker might go to the Bank with 1,000 guineas; at his pleasure, or at stated periods, he could draw out of the Bank 750 of those guineas; and this while he

was bound to pay his customer only in paper. Thus the cash, instead of coming to the public, would go into the hands of the bankers; and this at a time of great alarm with respect to public credit, and when, to increase that alarm, so strong a measure was to be proposed by the minister as that of sending more money to the Emperor. If the minister had endeavoured to invent a measure to empower bankers to increase the alarm for want of cash, he could not have hit upon a better to answer such a purpose.

Mr. *Dent* insisted, that no good reason had been adduced why the clause should not be adopted. It could do no harm, and it might do good.

Mr. *H. Thornton* was glad that the clause had attracted the attention of the House, because he had no doubt that it would be found, on consideration, to be so reasonable as to be adopted by them. He hoped it would now be understood that a clause was to be introduced into this bill, which would operate in some measure, as an immediate, though a partial opening of the Bank. From the time of the Bank's acting on this clause, any person who might have a superfluous quantity of cash, might, by paying it in the Bank in sums of 500*l.* save himself from the trouble and expense of keeping it at home without interest, and might count on receiving back three-fourths of it, nearly, if not exactly, at the periods when he might want it.—Mr. Thornton combated the idea of there being any dishonesty in the clause, by remarking, that he could not conceive that any banker would avail himself of the clause, by paying his own guineas into the Bank, unless he first began to pay indiscriminately those customers who asked guineas from him. He had received several accounts from country banks, stating, that they were in no want of guineas, and he had learnt from some, that they had a superabundance of them. In London, he understood guineas not to be scarce, and he assumed that bankers, who had plenty of cash, and who had entered into the association to discourage payments in guineas, would either no longer consider themselves bound by their agreement after the bill with this clause should have passed, or that they would, by public meeting or other means, release themselves from the supposed engagement, not to make general cash payments. As to the objection, of the clause being dishonest in regard to

the Bank, he put the case of a new corporation being established, into which all persons should be permitted, for the sake of general convenience, to make cash payments on terms agreed upon. Would this be dishonest; Certainly not. Why, therefore, was it dishonest for parliament to make the same Bank of England which had been the repository of cash before, to become the repository for it, in respect to all future payments? It was for the public benefit that it should be so. The country banks and others wanted such repository into which they might put their superfluous cash. Circumstanced as the country now was, and as it would continue to be if the bill passed without this clause, there was no inducement for country bankers to issue their accustomed paper circulation, by which issue alone, the guineas now in circulation could be spared out of it, and could be sent up to London. He insisted that it was necessary to begin with providing a repository of cash, from whence those who issued notes might get cash to answer their notes, if they should want it before the issue of notes could be expected. No banker would issue notes while he was obliged to retain all the guineas to answer them in his own hands, for such a trade could have no profit attending it. If this clause should pass, he trusted that bankers in the country would begin upon the credit of it to extend gradually their circulation, and would send the guineas which they might collect to the place which had always been the repository for those circulating, on having three-fourths of them returned, if necessary. He thought the clause might be very important in another view. An observation had been justly made some days ago in the House, that the era of the Bank's opening again would be an era of apprehension and difficulty, and that the directors themselves would feel a difficulty in knowing whether at three months end to open or not. He thought this clause would enable them to judge whether to open then, or whether they might not even anticipate the time, for by observing whether the guineas paid into the Bank by virtue of this clause, were called out again in any great quantities or not, they would be able to form a tolerable judgment on the subject. It was a mistake to suppose that it required a certain quantity of specie bearing a proportion to the outstanding notes, in order to give security for the punctual payments of a bank.

The specie should be proportioned, not to the notes out, but to the probable current demand. Suppose, for instance, that the Bank at the end of the three months should have a given quantity of guineas in its coffers, yet surely it would make a material point for their consideration, whether the foreign exchanges were favourable to their opening or otherwise. If the foreign exchanges were such as to imply that guineas were flowing into the country instead of flowing out of it, surely no one would deny that they might open in that case with a much smaller quantity of guineas than if the current was flowing the other way. In like manner, if they knew that guineas were flowing into the Bank from the country, antecedent to the end of the three months, instead of flowing from the Bank, they might venture to open with a much smaller stock of guineas in hand. This clause would enable the Bank to know which way the tide was running before they decided whether they would open.

Mr. *Sheridan* thought the proposition was puzzling and doubtful in its operation. If, as the hon. gentleman had stated, this measure constituted the Bank a sort of new corporation, then he doubted whether the old Bank and holders of old notes would consider themselves upon an equal footing of security with the former. He said it was the first time he had ever heard of bankers who scorned to make any interest of the money of their customers. In virtue of this clause, the bankers would make an advantage of three-fourths of their customers gold, and put the remaining one fourth into jeopardy. He denied that this clause would prevent money from being hoarded up, as three-fourths of the money deposited in the Bank would most probably lie there; and it was of little consequence to the public whether the money was hoarded up in the Bank, or in the coffers of individuals. He was also against the clause, because it gave a preference to bankers over merchants and others.

Mr. *Tierney* persisted in his objections to the clause, on the ground of its putting it into the power of the city bankers to embarrass the Bank at any particular time, by making large demands; a circumstance which was not at all unlikely, as he knew there was not at present a very good understanding subsisting between them and the Bank. In his opinion, the operation of this clause would go to

bring almost all the cash in the kingdom within the gripe of the bankers.

The clause was then agreed to.

Mr. Alderman *Combe* called the attention of the committee to what he conceived to be a matter of much more disgrace and inconvenience than even the consequences of personal arrest. He meant the situation in which tenants were then placed, without any proviso whatever in their favour of having their goods distrained for rent, though they might offer in payment notes of the bank of England. He should therefore propose a clause in their favour by which the tender of bank notes for rent due should be considered as a legal tender. As the law now stood, the sheriff's officers might proceed to a public sale of their goods, notwithstanding an absolute offer on their part of discharging the rent due in notes, which, in the present crisis, he considered a hardship of a very distressing nature. He, therefore, merely wished to place such creditors in the same situation as others; but this clause did not go to prevent an action by law.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the clause proposed by the worthy magistrate, appeared in his opinion to call for very mature consideration, before it could be received. He wished to be understood that he did not deliver any settled opinion, either for or against such a clause, but he only requested that the hon. gentleman, having given notice of his intention, would defer moving the clause, till some subsequent stage of the bill, or bring it in by way of rider.

Alderman *Combe* withdrew his clause for the present. The House resumed, and the Report was ordered to be taken into consideration on the 3d of April.

April 5. On the order of the day for the third reading of the bill,

Mr. *Bastard* said, that from the new clauses which had been added to the Bill, it became a measure much more formidable than what it originally was. He had hitherto heard no satisfactory reason why the public creditor should be compelled to take notes, in violation of the most solemn assurances. No step, as he could see, had been taken to do away the alarming crisis. We were merely applying palliatives. We ought to look to the great constitutional interests of the country. If they were secure, it necessarily followed, that all the lesser interests were

secured also. But now we had a fourth estate in the realm—a monied interest, bold in their projects, rash in their proceedings, and gigantic in their attempts. In the reign of Charles 1st, the mint was seized, and in that of Charles 2d, the exchequer was shut. The consequences of those times should be a lesson to us. He dreaded the overgrown influence of the monied interest. By one of the clauses, the Bank could advance a certain sum to whom they pleased. This gave them a power over the whole city of London. They could now do as they pleased—the revenue depended entirely on their discretion—the receiver was compelled to accept their notes—and the value of them, of course, depended upon their credit. Their power was so enormous, that they might almost dethrone the king; or joining with a bad administration, overturn the liberties of the people.

The bill was then read a third time. Mr. *Wilberforce Bird* then offered a clause by way of rider, declaring “That when a tender is made in bank notes for rent, the person to whom the rent is due, shall not take a distress.”

Mr. *Pitt* did not think the clause necessary, as it was not likely that distress would be enforced, if the person could pay in Bank notes.

Mr. *Jolliffe* thought that the clause made too great a difference between landholders and other creditors, and that if such a regulation were at all to be adopted, it should be made general.

Mr. *Fox* thought that there was as much necessity for this clause as for the regulation in case of arrests; because, if he was not mistaken, there was no bail admitted in cases of distress and sale of goods.

The *Solicitor General* said, that the clause went beyond the former clause. In cases of distress, there was the remedy of replevin, and if his clause was at all to be adopted, it ought to be with the amendment that bank notes to the amount of the rent should be deposited with the sheriff, with the person's own bond, instead of the two securities which were now required in the action of replevin. He conceived the clause to be unnecessary, however, because if the person in danger of being distressed actually possessed bank notes, and had property to the amount of the rent, he could easily find sureties.

Mr. *Allardice* was against the clause,

because it went to make bank notes still farther a legal tender, which he thought impolitic.

Mr. *Manning* was against the clause, though he thought it more necessary for individuals than the clauses which had been introduced. With regard to the Bank and individual bankers, he was sorry that such clauses had been passed, as he did not think they were necessary. He was convinced that the associations which had been entered into would sufficiently answer the object. All that was wanting was, only to confirm the order of council, and to restrain the Bank from issuing specie for a certain time.

The clause was negatived.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, that the clause he had to propose would ascertain the fact which at present was doubtful, namely, whether the order of council had taken place in consequence of the application of the Bank, or was merely a measure of government? If the Bank went and stated their situation to government, he considered it as equivalent to an application. If the Bank really desired this measure, he thought that their charter was forfeited. It was not his wish to deprive them of their charter, but he wished to deprive them of their monopoly, which he thought prejudicial to the public, and even to themselves. The clause stated, "That the restraint laid by this act on the Bank, as to issuing cash, shall not have any force or effect, unless the governor and company shall, within a limited time after the bill is passed by the House of Commons, signify in writing to the speaker, to be communicated to the House, and entered on the Journals, that it is the desire of the governor and company, that such restraint should be continued for the whole of the time mentioned in the bill, or for any shorter time to be mentioned in such notice."

Mr. *Pitt* opposed the clause, as being contradictory to the whole of the grounds on which the bill was formed. A legislative enactment to ascertain a fact which was the object of the clause, was the oddest idea which he had ever heard. The measure of the worthy baronet was fairly avowed, and it was no less than to deprive the Bank of his charter. The opinion of the House in different stages of the bill had been, that public credit was to be restored in the person of the Bank, and he was convinced that they would feel it neither honourable nor politic to support

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the views which the worthy baronet professed.

Mr. *Fox* supported the clause, on the ground that it would ascertain whether the stoppage of the Bank was a measure taken upon the exercise of the best judgment of the directors of that corporation, or whether it was dictated solely by government.

The question being put, that the said clause be brought up, the House divided: Yeas, 43; Noes, 79.

April 7. The House having resumed the adjourned proceeding upon the third reading of the bill,

Mr. *Fox* proposed the clause he had formerly mentioned, which was to enable the Bank to pay in cash any sum, or any part of any debt or demand, on giving notice to the speaker of the House of Commons, to be published as therein mentioned.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the clause in its present shape, went to impose a severe hardship upon the Bank. He wished to amend it by adding, after the word "cash," these words, "out of any cash which shall have come into the hands of the said governor and company, subsequent to the 26th of February last, and which shall be at their disposal."

Mr. *Hobhouse* was against the clause, because he thought it might delude the country. The finance minister had seized on the chest of the Bank. Public credit had received a wound that it would not soon recover. He thought there was no prospect of the Bank paying in cash before the expiration of the bill, if ever they paid in cash again.

Mr. *Fox* said, that the object of the clause was, to ascertain whether the refusal of the Bank to pay in cash, was the effect of the prohibition or of their own choice. He thought there had been something like a juggle between government and the Bank, on whom the responsibility should fall.

Mr. *Pitt* could not agree to the clause, unless the amendment was adopted. The effect of it would be, to throw an unfair burden upon the Bank.

The House divided on the amendment Yeas, 103; Noes, 31.

Sir *William Pulteney* then said:—I gave notice that it was my intention to move an amendment at the third reading of this bill, by leaving out the words "24th of June," for the purpose of introducing

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the words "6th of May." The object of the amendment is to shorten the time during which the Bank of England shall be restrained from issuing cash, in the payment of its notes and other debts. My objection to the length of time allowed by the bill, as it now stands is not only that I am convinced that the time allowed, or, indeed, a much longer time, if that were intended, would not enable the Bank to pay the demands upon it in cash, as formerly, but because our situation has become of so perilous a nature, that we ought, on no account, to delay a moment longer than is absolutely necessary, to take the most effectual means of placing this country upon its former lofty footing of national credit. When I ventured to state, very early in the progress of this bill, that we might attain that end in a month, I did not know that the blank in the bill was intended to be filled up with so distant a date. I had the less reason to suppose that it would, as there was a clause, at the end of the bill, reserving a power to repeal, alter, or vary the act, during the present session. It was flattering to me, that the House at that time showed a degree of impatience to know what remedy had occurred on so interesting a subject. I did not, however, impute it so much to any expectations from me, as to the general sensation of the dangerous situation in which the country was placed, by the sudden stop of payments in cash by the Bank, and it was therefore natural that every glimmering of hope should be eagerly grasped at. I was pressed, at a second debate, to explain myself; and I then proposed, that the filling up the blank should be postponed for a few days, in hopes, that what I meant to state might be a ground for filling up the blank with a very short time, and the House seemed not unwilling to agree to that short delay; but a motion having been made concerning the time to be inserted in the blank, and an amendment for a shorter time proposed, a division took place, and the words "24th of June" were carried by a majority. I had an opportunity, however, of so far giving an idea at that time, of the principle feature of my plan, by asking whether there was, in the records of history, any instance where a monopoly had ever conducted its affairs well; and I added, that I did not complain of the Bank, or of its directors, because it was in the nature of man that a monopoly must necessarily be ill con-

ducted. The blank being thus filled up, the moment for explaining my ideas was no longer pressing; and as hopes were given to the House, that the Secret Committee, on the causes which occasioned the fatal minute of council, would very soon bring down their report, it appeared to me that the facts, which must be stated in that report, would give great light to the House, and would enable it the better to judge of any propositions which might be suggested as a remedy against the consequences of the late alarming event. I therefore determined to delay the matter till after that report should be printed; but, having declared that I made no secret of my ideas, I have had the advantage since that time of discussing the subject with many different persons, and I have no reason to think that their opinions are very different from my own.

I think it, however, necessary to move an amendment as to the period for paying cash at the Bank, in this last stage of the bill, that the House may have an opportunity of again considering the magnitude of the question, and that I may take this occasion of removing some erroneous ideas, which have been entertained, concerning the nature of my intended proposition. The object which all of us must have in view, is the restoration of credit as speedily as possible; but there is another object of not less importance, the putting an end to all possible risk of a similar misfortune in future. Security for the future ought, I think, to attract the attention, even more powerfully than immediate relief from an existing temporary evil. The ideas, however, which I shall submit to the House, have not only in view our future security, but the best and most immediate remedy for the existing evil, and, in my opinion, that remedy must chiefly arise from the putting an end to the monopoly of the Bank of England. I know there are many prejudices in the public mind with regard to this subject; but I am never afraid of such prejudices, if the measure be in itself right. I know that the people of this country will always listen to reason, and are capable of understanding it, when proper pains are taken to place things in their proper light. Whether this excellent and distinguishing quality of our countrymen be owing to the nature of our free government, and the liberty of the press, which gives every man an interest to judge, and also the means of judging of public affairs; or

whether it proceeds from that natural good sense, and that candour and sound judgment, which our people are admitted to possess, I know not; but I have never entertained any apprehension, from any prejudices which the people of England may have taken up, whether of recent or of long standing, because I have always seen that they give way in time, to truth and reason, when properly explained. The prejudices in favour of the present Bank have proceeded, from the long habit of considering it as a sort of pillar, which nothing could shake. Its antiquity alone has had a great effect, and the imposing mystery which has hitherto been observed in the conduct of its affairs, has created an awe and veneration, which the human mind must, for a time, have some difficulty to overcome. But the late events, have, in a great measure, dispelled this charm: the Bank of England has been obliged to disclose the state of its affairs, the veil is drawn up, and we see nothing of that fancied magnificence, which, till now, made a wonderful impression. It can never again, I believe, assume the same place in the imagination of the public.

The prejudices in favour of the Bank, are, however, upheld by another very powerful cause. The Bank has been supported, and is still supported, by the fear and terror which, by means of its monopoly, it has had the power to inspire. It is well known, that there is hardly an extensive trader, a manufacturer, or a banker, either in London, or at a distance from it, to whom the Bank could not do a serious injury, and could often bring on even insolvency. This may be easily understood, by attending to the manner of carrying on business at the Bank. It is the practice of all traders to receive bills of exchange from their correspondents, usually payable at two months, or at shorter periods: when they have occasion for cash they offer these bills to the Bank to be discounted, and receive bank notes for the amount, deducting the interest. These bank notes have hitherto been held as the same thing as cash. If the Bank, from any motive, should refuse to discount the bills presented by any trader, the refusal, in the first place, brings his credit into question; and though, on such occasions, he may often get his bills discounted by the bankers or monied men, yet this is not always the case; and in times when money is parti-

cularly valuable, discounts are hardly any where to be obtained, except from the Bank. This case applies chiefly to the traders in London; but the London bankers themselves are in no better situation, for the business of most of them is connected with their country correspondents, who send up bills, payable at the usual time, and then draw upon the bankers, who cannot, with safety, accept such bills to any great extent, unless they are sure of being able to get their correspondents bills discounted at the Bank to answer the acceptances desired. The Bank, by refusing such discounts, or even lessening the usual quantity of discount, can immediately oblige the banker to restrain his country correspondents from drawing upon him; by which the banker's profits are diminished, and his country correspondents are embarrassed; which must also immediately affect all those with whom the country correspondents are connected.—By the same means the Bank has the power of injuring every country bank in the kingdom: for the country banks, in order to give currency to their notes, are obliged to pay cash on demand, or give bills on London; which bills in the country are for the most part preferred to cash; because remittances are continually making to London from all parts of the kingdom. Every country bank, must, therefore, have a correspondent banker in London, on whom he can draw, when necessary, and to whom he sends all bills on London, which the country bank happens to discount. The Bank of England has always been jealous of the country banks; though, in truth, they have not only promoted the general prosperity of the country, with which the prosperity of the Bank is closely connected, but would have contributed much more to the prosperity of the Bank of England itself, if the spirit of monopoly had permitted it to judge fairly. It has often happened that the Bank of England has refused, or lessened, the discounts, to the correspondents of particular country banks, which immediately oblige them to restrain their country correspondent bank, from drawing in the same manner as before, which of necessity affected the transactions of the country bank, and obliged it to diminish its usual discounts, to the great inconvenience of its neighbourhood.

But if the power of the Bank of England was great, with respect to traders of all descriptions, it was still more impor-

tant, with regard to the government of the country. It is well known, that no war can now be carried on by this country, without loans; and in all cases of loans, it has been the usual practice of the Bank to advance the farther instalments on the subscriptions, after the subscribers had paid a certain proportion, and the Bank of England was contented to receive repayment from the subscribers, about the time of the last instalment, by which means the subscribers had the opportunity of selling the new stock gradually, and generally to advantage.—Whenever the Bank, from any cause or motive, has chosen to alter its former practice, and has either refused to pay any instalments for the subscribers, or to pay in a different mode, it has, I believe, never failed to occasion a fall in the price of the new subscription, and thereby the subscribers have often lost considerably: in consequence of which, it always became impossible for government to make subsequent loans on so good terms as before. I have said enough to show, that government has been rendered dependent on the Bank, and more particularly so in the time of war; and though the Bank has not yet fallen into the hands of ambitious men, yet it is evident that it might, in such hands, assume a power sufficient to control and overawe, not only the executive government, but King, Lords, and Commons.

As the Bank has thus become dangerous to government, it might, on the other hand, by uniting with an ambitious minister, become the means of establishing a fourth estate, sufficient to involve this nation in irretrievable slavery, and ought, therefore, to be dreaded as much as a certain East-India bill was justly dreaded, at a period not very remote. I will not say, that the present minister, by endeavouring at this crisis to take the Bank of England under his protection, can have any view to make use hereafter of that engine, to perpetuate his own power, and to enable him to domineer over our constitution: if that could be supposed, it would only show, that men can entertain a very different train of ideas, when endeavouring to upset a rival, from what occurs to them when intending to support and fix themselves. My object is to secure the country against all risk, either from the Bank, as opposed to government and the constitution, or as the engine of ambitious men, to maintain themselves

in a dangerous power. I could wish to know, if any man thinks that his majesty would be at free liberty to change a minister, who had once obtained a decided ascendancy in the direction of the Bank of England, retaining its monopoly.

When the report of the Secret Committee comes, I have no doubt I shall be able to satisfy the House, that the necessity of preventing the issue of cash from the Bank, was occasioned by their own misconduct. In the mean time, I assure the House, that my ideas concerning the misconduct of the Bank, and the danger from its monopoly, are not lately taken up, but that the same opinion has prevailed in my mind for more than five and twenty years, founded upon facts which had then come to my knowledge, and since that time a great number of facts have confirmed me uniformly in that opinion. I have never had the idea of recommending any breach of parliamentary faith, respecting the monopoly of the Bank. I consider the observance of parliamentary faith, as one of the most important pillars on which this country stands: our public credit, which has chiefly proved the means of raising us so high amongst nations, has no other foundation on which it can securely rest. It is material, however, to state to the House, what is the nature of this monopoly, and how it originated. The Bank of England was established in consequence of an act of the 5th and 6th William and Mary, in 1694, by which act certain duties were imposed, and commissioners were authorized to receive subscriptions, and the Crown was empowered, when the subscriptions should be complete, to the amount of 1,200,000*l.* as a loan to government for the war, to grant a charter of incorporation to the subscribers, under the name of "The Governor and Company of the Bank of England," for which sum the company was to receive an interest of 80,000*l.* and 4,000*l.* for expense of management, making 84,000*l.* per annum, but subject to redemption. A charter was accordingly granted, which, after reciting the act of parliament and other matters, contains these important words: "Now know ye, that we, being desirous to promote the public good and benefit of our people, which in these presents are chiefly designed and intended, as well as the profits and advantage of all such as have subscribed and contributed according to the said act of parliament,"

&c. The Bank of England, soon afterwards, was much embarrassed in its affairs, and government interposed to support it, by means of exchequer bills. The war having continued, it was thought necessary by government, to apply to the Bank for a farther loan; and as a mark of gratitude, the Bank insisted, that they should be invested with a monopoly. This was done by an act 7th and 8th William and Mary, declaring, "that during the subsistence of their charter, no other company should be incorporated with a power of issuing notes payable on demand." Afterwards, in the reign of queen Anne, the nation then being at war, it became necessary to apply for another loan from the Bank: which upon that occasion obtained, by an act 6th and 7th of queen Anne, a farther security for their monopoly; that act declares, "that during the Bank charter, no persons more in number than six in partnership, should be allowed to issue notes payable in a less time than six months." These two acts constitute the present monopoly of the Bank; for as no company can be incorporated, no persons can join in partnership to issue notes, without being answerable to the full amount of their fortunes, and even if they were willing to engage upon that dangerous footing, the number being limited to six, no such company could ever have a capital sufficient to stand in any competition with the Bank of England, nor has it ever been attempted. Several other loans were made to government, amounting at last, to 3,200,000*l.*, which sum, by the several acts, must be repaid to the Bank upon redemption of their charter and monopoly; and the period of such redemption has, from time to time, been prolonged. The Bank, however, made several other advances to government, amounting with the said 3,200,000*l.* in the whole to above 11,000,000*l.* For these additional advances, annuities were accepted by the Bank, and these stand upon the same footing as other public stocks, for which payment of the principal cannot be demanded.

As my object is merely to divest the Bank of its monopoly, I have no intention that it should be deprived of its right to act as a corporation. I consider the power given by the monopoly to be of the nature of all other despotic power, which corrupts the despot, as much as it corrupts the slave; but the power of acting

without a monopoly can have no such effect, and may be very useful to the public. Neither have I any intention, that the proprietors of bank stock should be, in any degree, injured. I am convinced that their dividends, instead of being diminished, will be considerably increased by the change. As little have I any intention to deprive the directors of their salaries, though I certainly wish to deprive them of the dangerous part of their present powers. It may, at first sight, seem very extraordinary to assert, that the profits of the Bank would become more considerable without having a monopoly, than with it. This, however, is not mere theory, but has been ascertained by practice; for, besides the daily experience we have of want of exertion, with regard to tradesmen, who have exclusive privileges; amongst whom, however, some degree of competition always exists; I can refer the House to an example which now exists, and is exactly in point. The House has learnt, by a clause which has just now been added to this bill, as a rider for allowing to each of the two banks in Scotland, an issue of 25,000*l.* in cash from the Bank here, if demanded by them; that there are two banks in Scotland, that one of them was established by an act of the Scotch parliament in 1695, one year after the Bank of England, and the other by a royal charter in 1727. The first bank was created in the same manner as the Bank of England, without any monopoly; and as government had never occasion to apply for a loan of money from that bank, it never had the opportunity of making the unreasonable demand of a monopoly; but from the situation of the country, which was unable, from want of capital, to establish at that time another bank, it, in fact, acted in the usual manner of a monopoly, was very limited in its operations, and was considered as acting very frequently with partiality. After the rebellion in 1715, it was supposed to favour a particular party, the Jacobites, which induced government to promote the establishment of another bank in 1727. There are the most undoubted proofs, that as late as 1725, there was the greatest scarcity of money in Scotland, that loans were obtained, even for small sums, with difficulty, and that no regularity was observed in payments. A capital could not, indeed, have been found for the new bank, if the idea had not occurred of

employing, for that purpose, the money, which, at the Union, was agreed to be paid to Scotland, as an equivalent for certain prior English taxes; to which, by the Union, though they had been imposed to pay the interest of English national debts, Scotland was to become subject.

After the new Bank was established, each of them, for some time, viewed the other with jealousy and apprehension. This, by degrees, wore off, and each began to issue their notes more freely. From this time a new spring was given to the exertions and industry of the country, and all who have had occasion to be acquainted with it, know that its progress has been more rapid than any thing that has occurred, perhaps, in the history of the world, unless what is lately said to have happened in America. The effect of this progress began to be very much observed soon after the rebellion of 1745, and the cause of it not having immediately occurred to common observation, it was by many supposed to have arisen from the money sent down to pay the troops of government, during the rebellion; but it required little sagacity to perceive, that the interruption which the industry of the country must have met with, during that scene of confusion, must have amounted to a much greater loss than could be compensated by any advantages from the pay of the troops. The progress since has been still more rapid; which has been assisted too, by the establishment of many inferior banks in the principal towns, none of which could have been established, if the two banks at Edinburgh had not, by the issue of their notes, in proportion as the growing transactions of the country required, afforded a considerable mass of circulating medium, for the commencement of a circulating capital to the inferior banks. The two incorporated banks have not, however, suffered either by the competition between them, or by the establishment of these inferior banks, but on the contrary, have gone on continually increasing their profits. Each of them found, after some time, that their first capitals were insufficient to supply the demands of their business, and each of them have twice come to this House for powers to increase their capital stock. I believe the stock of the old bank did not sell at much premium, till some time after the establishment of the new bank, but it afterwards rose to 400 per cent,

and I believe the stock of the other bank rose in proportion. Since the great increase of each of their capitals, they have been able to make such considerable dividends, that even the increased stock sold till very lately at the premium of 170 or 180 per cent. A clear proof, that each of them has succeeded, much better than either could have done without a competition. This experience, I hope, will satisfy the House, that I do not proceed upon speculation when I assert, that the proprietors of bank stock will not suffer, but greatly profit by the establishment of another bank. When it is considered too, what a wide field the flourishing and progressive state of the trade and industry of this country affords; when it is proved beyond all doubt, that the amount of our exports and imports have increased above all calculation; what apprehension can we entertain, that there is not full room for the trade of two great banking companies in this metropolis, as well as for the establishment of numberless inferior banks in the principal places of the kingdom?

It has been circulated out of doors, that I intended to propose the establishment of an opposition bank; but I never meant an opposition bank, nor even a rival bank. The bank which I should think of recommending, would merely be one to supply to the trade, the manufactures, and the agriculture of the country, what the present bank has not chosen, or has been unable to supply, and that deficiency is much more than enough, to give full employment to another bank equal to the present. It has also been supposed, that I meant, that the new bank should issue paper not convertible into coin at all times according to the will of the holder, and that its paper would be a fictitious currency. No such idea ever entered into my mind. My opinion has been uniform, that no paper can ever answer as a medium for the circulation of commodities, which is not at any moment convertible into coin, at the option of the holder. It is upon this account, that I have so strongly felt the dangerous consequences which may arise, from making the period so remote as the 24th of June when the present bank shall pay cash for its debts and demands. In no country of the world, has paper of any other sort than such as was immediately convertible into coin, been long able to pass at par, and I dread, that our folly may lead us, to bring the paper of the present bank to

a discount, by an ill-judged indulgence. If this shall once happen, it will soon be reduced to the same state as the French assignats. But if another bank be established, I think it not only ought to be an express condition in the charter, that it shall pay at all times, cash for its notes, but also, that it shall be a forfeiture of the charter, if at any time, or on any account, the bank should ever apply to government, directly or indirectly, to protect it from paying in cash every demand which may come against it.

I shall now take notice of some of the causes which have been assigned for the distress of the Bank, and the unhappy minute of council. This dire event has been ascribed to the advances made by the Bank to government; and the chancellor of the exchequer must, I think, have proceeded upon that idea, if it be true that he authorized the governor of the Bank to inform the proprietors, that it was his intention to propose to parliament, to repay to the Bank, out of the intended loan, no less a sum than six or seven millions. An hon. gentleman was strongly of this opinion when he introduced a motion on the subject, resting very much upon the heavy and repeated complaints of the directors of the Bank, with respect to their advances, and the failure of government to repay them. I shall make no defence of government as to its failure of keeping promise, especially in money matters, for it admits of no palliation; but, with respect to the effect produced by its loans to government on the situation of the Bank, I am convinced that those loans have not been the cause of its present distress; and I farther think, that the Bank has no fair ground to demand repayment from government, at this critical moment, of any part of the occasional advances. It is not pretended, I believe, by the directors that by making these advances to government, they increased the total amount of the notes put out in the circle, or, in other words, they do not assert, that they continued their discounts to the same amount as before, and that they made their loans to government by an issue of additional notes to the amount of the loan. If that be not the case, and that the same number of notes would have been out, whether they had lent to government or not, it seems to me, to be impossible to maintain, that the present distress of the Bank can proceed from that cause. It is said, indeed, that if the

notes were issued in the way of discount, the notes would be returning to the Bank in regular payments, at stated periods: but of what importance is this, if it be true? then an equal number of notes would in both cases have been out in the circle, and would have borne the same proportion to the quantity of cash in the bank coffers, to pay them on demand; for it is certain, that, at all times, a very small proportion of the advances by the Bank to government have been made in actual cash. The issues made to government in notes are speedily thrown into the circle: they come very soon into the hands of the bankers, who again use them in discounts, and in that way they equally act as a medium of circulation, as if the notes were issued and re-issued by the Bank itself on discount. It is perfectly well known, that every banker in London keeps a considerable quantity of bank notes always in his possession for carrying on his trade, amounting, amongst the whole bankers, to a good many millions. These notes, when in possession of the bankers, are perfectly harmless with regard to demands made for cash on the Bank, because the notes, till very lately, were considered by the bankers, as well as by their customers, as preferable, for many reasons, to cash, except to fractional sums. A part of the bankers trade is to deal in discount, and the notes which are necessary for such transactions are continually going out, and continually returning back to his shop in the same manner, as happens with regard to discounts at the office of the Bank, and they occasion no additional demand for cash on the Bank, any more than if the discounts were all carried on by the Bank itself, and the Bank receives 5 per cent interest for these very notes from government, without having the trouble of employing them itself in discounts, by which they would only gain the same interest.

With regard to the propriety of the demand of the Bank, of re-payment at this time of its late advances to government, it will be necessary to state to the House, the amount of these advances. There are three accounts upon the table of the House relating to these advances; by the first, the amount is stated by the Bank, on the 1st of October, 1796, to have been 9,183,896*l*. In the next account, the advances are made to amount, on the 25th of February last, to 9,964,413*l*.; but neither of these accounts include any interest.

By the last accounts, they are made to amount, on the 9th of March 1797, to 10,916,010*l.*, in which is included 580,670*l.* as the amount of interest. It appears by the several statements, and particularly by the second account, that about 6,000,000*l.* has been advanced upon the land-tax and malt-tax. It also appears, that 141,000*l.* is still due as advanced on the land for 1794, and 312,000*l.* for 1795. This arrear must probably arise, partly from interest, and partly from money still remaining in the hands of the collectors. But there is an arrear in 1796, of 1,000,624*l.*, which is probably on account of the second land-tax of 1796; collected, as usual, after Lady-day of the succeeding year. The land-tax for 1797 is stated as 2,000,000*l.* in arrear; and this is certainly an advance by the Bank to government, upon the land-tax which will be collected in the course of the present year, but of which no part can yet have been collected, nor the whole till after Lady-day 1798.—The same sort of observations apply to the advances on malt. There is stated a considerable arrear in 1794 and 1795, which probably may chiefly proceed from the constant deficiency upon this tax, and the interest on the Bank advances; but it seems strange, that the whole of the malt-tax for 1796, is stated as in arrear, though, at least the half of it ought, I imagine, to have been received before the 9th of March. This seems to imply a degree of negligence. The malt, for 1797, is properly stated as all due, being an advance by the Bank upon the vote of parliament, before any part of that year's tax could be collected; but it will be found, by an account to be afterwards referred to, that though the whole of the land and malt for 1797 is stated as due to the Bank by government, yet that a considerable part of the money, though agreed to be lent on those taxes, had, on the 25th of February, still remained in the hands of the Bank, subject, indeed, to the calls which government might make. With regard, however, to the money thus advanced on the land and malt, amounting to near 6,000,000*l.*, the Bank can, I think, have no fair claim for immediate repayment, because they have at all times taken these taxes as their security, and perfectly understood, that they were to be repaid as the taxes came in. They have also, indeed, another security; for I understand it is the practice, whenever the Bank agrees to make advances upon the

land or malt, that exchequer bills to the full amount of these taxes are delivered, and are from time to time set apart by the Bank, as the advances are gradually made, and from that time the respective exchequer bills bear interest. If, therefore, the Bank were at any time embarrassed, on account of the amount of advances actually made on the land or malt, I apprehend the directors would be entitled to sell these exchequer bills in the market, in order to raise the money, by which operation the Bank could only lose the occasional discount; and I admit, that in such a case the Bank might probably have a fair claim on government, in case of such actual distress, to make good that discount. It therefore appears to me, that the Bank can have no fair claim for immediate repayment from government of the money advanced on the land or malt, except to the amount of the known deficiency of the tax on malt, and the interest incurred; which observation takes off a very great proportion of this 6,000,000*l.* from the total claim (including interest) of 10,916,010*l.*—There are, besides, two other deductions to make from the demand of the Bank; the account states an advance on the consolidated fund, 1796, of 1,323,000*l.* I consider this advance in nearly the same light as the advances on the land and malt; for it is advanced upon particular taxes, out of which it is expected by the Bank to be repaid, as the taxes come in; and I believe exchequer bills are also in the same manner lodged for this advance. The other article to be deducted, is 376,730*l.*, being the amount of unclaimed dividends, which cannot surely be considered as a debt due by government, unless these old dividends were actually paid by the Bank, which is never likely to happen; and for this sum also exchequer bills are lodged. When these several deductions are made, the total amount, for the immediate repayment of which the Bank can have a fair claim, including all interest, is no more than 3,295,380*l.*; and if to this be added the deficiency on malt, and even the 1,323,000*l.* on the consolidated fund, the total will not amount to 5,000,000*l.*

But even against this remaining claim government is entitled to state several considerable sums of money; for it will appear by an account which will be brought before the House, that the Bank were in possession, on the 26th of February, of government money to the amount of nearly five

millions sterling, for which they allow to government no interest whatever, whilst they have charged to government, as is usual with bankers, full interest on all the money actually advanced for the public. These sums consist of three articles, viz. 1st, cash deposits, about 2,000,000*l*. It is believed, that though part of this money may be deposits from individuals, yet that a very great part of it is government only, arising from the produce of various taxes, which are paid into the Bank almost weekly from the different offices; and though continually going out by the drafts of government, are also continually coming in again, by new payments from the offices, so as always to leave a large balance in the hands of the Bank. 2dly, dividends issued for payment to sundries 1,800,000*l*. This sum, I believe, is either the amount of dividends which were payable early in January, and not yet called for, or what has been impressed, for payment of the dividends, to be issued early in this month of April. The third sum in the hands of the Bank, is exchequer bills, to the amount of 1,200,000*l*. This seems to be money, which the Bank has, indeed, undertaken to issue on demand to government, on the credit of exchequer bills, but was not, in fact issued on the 25th of February last, and therefore remained with it, out of some of the advances which the Bank had agreed to make. The whole make a total of five million.

From this view of the account between the Bank and government, it seems to appear, that the late distress of the Bank cannot possibly have arisen from the advances to government, but from some other cause; and, secondly, that there can be no fair ground for the demand now made by the Bank, to have an immediate repayment of six or seven millions from the public. It is said, however, that the Bank directors have informed the merchants, that if the Bank shall obtain repayment of such a sum from government, out of the intended loan, they will greatly increase their discounts for the support of commercial credit. I think the merchants will deceive themselves, if they expect any actual relief by such means; because the present difficulties have evidently arisen from a deficiency of the total necessary quantity of circulating medium; and in consequence of the proposed loan, a great proportion of that existing medium will be withdrawn from

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the hands in which it is now placed, and where it is now acting in circulation, and will then be paid into the Bank; which operation must of necessity diminish the existing quantity of the medium now in the circle. So long, therefore, as the loan remains with the Bank, after being paid in, before it be re-issued, it is withdrawn from the uses to which it is now applied; and even if the whole of what is paid in were to be reissued by the Bank, it would make no difference as to the total quantity in circulation, but would in the interval occasion considerable distress whilst it is in its progress to the Bank, and before it has had time to return from thence, by being re-issued in discounts.—

I do not, however, understand that the Bank has ever explicitly undertaken to re-issue, in discounts, the whole that shall be repaid to them. The Directors have contented themselves with making vague and general declarations of good intentions, upon which the commercial body cannot, and ought not to rely; and whatever part of the repayment the Bank does not re-issue, it will be so much withdrawn from the present scanty and deficient quantity of circulating medium. This argument proceeds upon the supposition, that the repayment will be made to the Bank in its own notes; and there is little probability, that any thing but fractional sums will be repaid in cash; and if the Bank re-issues the whole of the notes, the operation will make no difference between their cash and the quantity of their notes which are out; on the other hand, if they do not re-issue the whole, it may, indeed, make a difference in the proportion of cash, but will essentially distress the commercial circulation, which, if they had not a monopoly, they could not be called upon to attend to: but having a monopoly, it is an essential part of their duty. In every view, therefore, the plan of immediate repayment to the Bank, seems to have been formed without due consideration of the circumstances of the case.

I will say little on the subject of another cause, which has been assigned by many, as the true ground of the present distress; I mean the exportation of coin or bullion. The public mind, I believe, is now sufficiently informed and enlightened upon that subject, and the author of the "*Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*" has so clearly refuted all the gross and vulgar ideas upon this point, that it can-

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not be necessary to say much upon it. I mentioned to the House, in a former debate, the case of Spain and Portugal, as a proof of the gross error of all such ideas. To these two countries, about six millions of gold and silver are annually brought from the mines, and in both the strictest prohibitory laws are enforced against their exportation; yet it has been found altogether impossible to retain these precious metals: and if they could be retained, it would be a most material loss to both these countries; for if the whole of the gold and silver, which has been imported during so long a period from their mines, were now in these countries, and could not go abroad, they would be of little or no value there; the two countries want no more than is necessary for their limited circulation at home, and for plate and ornaments. The value of the remainder arises from the want which other countries have of these metals, having no mines of their own; and that value cannot be obtained, if they are not allowed to be exported. The truth is, that no laws in any country can prevent the precious metals from going out, or from coming back. They always must, and will follow the actual demand; and all sorts of prohibitions with regard to them, are only hurtful to the countries which make them.

This leads me to take notice of a circumstance with regard to the state of the coin in the coffers of the Bank. An account has been lately presented to the House, of the coinage at the mint, from 1793 to 1796 inclusive, by which it appears, that during the first two of these four years the Bank coined in gold 5,306,324*l.* But in the second two years, to the 30th Nov. 1796, the Bank coined only in gold 885,205*l.* And in one of these two last years, 1795, they coined silver 295*l.* 5*s.* making, 885,500*l.* 5*s.* So that there was a deficiency in the coinage of the last two years, compared with the two first years, of no less than 4,420,823*l.* 15*s.* The House knows, that the whole coinage, both of gold and silver, has at all times, in this century, been made in consequence of bullion sent to the mint by the Bank. There was, indeed, a great recoinage, chiefly of silver, in the reign of king William, and another great re-coinage of light guineas during the administration of lord North. It appears, by a table published in "*Chalmers's Estimate*," that the re-coinage of gold and silver, from 1780 to 1792, excepting during four

years, was, on an average, 2,248,011*l.* per annum; the Bank seems, therefore, to have been highly culpable, during the last two years, in having decreased, to the amount of nearly four millions and a half, the usual quantity of coinage; when, on the contrary, they ought, in time of war, to have increased very much, their usual coinage, in order to assist the commerce of the country, during an increased demand for the means of circulation. This obvious precaution would have enabled it to answer the extraordinary demands for a circulating medium, which is always occasioned by a state of war. There seems little more necessary than this, to account for the present situation of the Bank; but, in truth, there are other obvious causes, which I shall not enter into until the evidence comes down from the secret committee I shall only observe, that it appears from the coinage table in Chalmers, that the Bank fell into the same unaccountable error, or rather followed the same practice (for it is impossible to suppose that they did not foresee the consequences), during the two last years of the American war, and the two immediate following years, viz. 1781, 1782, 1783, and 1784, when the average coinage amounted to only 6,560,855*l.* per annum, and the consequences were nearly the same as at present, by reducing the stocks to a very low price, and occasioning very general distress.

It is said, however, that there is no ground for expecting, that the Bank ought to be at the sole expense of coining; for though the coinage be at the expense of government, yet it frequently costs more to the Bank for bullion, when the exchange is unfavourable, than the amount the Bank receives in the current value of guineas when returned from the mint, which loss falls upon the Bank: and it is also said, that the Bank directors cannot be accused of having ever refused to buy whatever gold bullion is brought to them, and that they always sent it to be coined at the mint. With regard to the first, it is certainly true, that if the Bank did not enjoy a monopoly, there would be no reason for expecting that it should undertake the expense of furnishing gold for coining, except for the circulation of their own particular notes; whereas at present it is admitted, that almost all the inferior banks are furnished with coin at the expense of the Bank of England; but this is merely the price which the Bank

pays for holding its monopoly, from which it will, of course, in a great degree, be relieved, when that is at an end. It is merely a deduction from their very great profits, and it can be shown, that if matters were so managed, as would be done if a competition was established, there would be great gain, instead of loss, by a plentiful coinage, even when the exchange is most unfavourable. At the same time I admit, that our gold currency in this country, is not at present properly regulated; I mean as to the true proportional value between gold and silver, which in all countries is attended with manifest disadvantage; but in this country the effects of this are counteracted by other circumstances.—With regard to the second objection, it may be true, that the Bank has not refused to purchase gold that was brought to them; but, in the first place, they cannot assert, that, within these two or three years, they have not often refused to purchase dollars, and thereby forced them to be re-exported; and, secondly, even as to gold, the answer is far from amounting to a justification; because it seems to have been their duty, as monopolists, to have procured gold wherever it could be obtained, without trusting merely to what might be brought to them by other people; and it is understood that the Bank has, for some time at least, established a fixed price, higher than which they will never consent to purchase gold, and, of consequence, they cannot expect, that any other gold will be brought to them, except the light guineas, which it is not worth the while of the holders to melt and recoin: and those light guineas, which are voluntarily brought to the Bank, are believed to have been almost the only re-coinage that has, in fact, been made by the Bank for the last two years, during a part of which time, the exchange being unfavourable, the price of gold has been higher than the mint price; but certainly, if the Bank maintains its monopoly, it is bound in justice to the public, to provide always a sufficient quantity of gold to answer fully the circulation of its notes.

It appears to me, that the establishment of another bank, would be so far from hurting the credit of the present Bank, that nothing could tend more to its speedy re-establishment; for the new bank, by paying cash for all its notes on demand, would certainly diminish the demands for cash upon the present Bank; and by adding to the circulating medium that defi-

ciency of quantity, which, by exciting general distress and general diffidence, has been one of the principal causes of the demand for cash from every quarter, the present Bank would evidently be very much relieved. I am very far from wishing to diminish the credit of the present Bank, or to prevent its notes from having a free circulation, particularly during the present period, whilst cash for its notes cannot be paid. It is most essential to the country, that they should continue to pass freely; but every one must admit, that this cannot, in the nature of things, continue to be the case long, and that, if payments in cash do not speedily recommence at the Bank, its notes cannot continue to be held as of equal value to gold and silver; they must suffer a gradual depreciation, and will, if they continue in the circle, become soon in the same state with the French assignats. It is on this account, that I have anxiously wished, that the period for re-opening the Bank should be shortened. But, supposing the House to continue of its former opinion, and fix that period for the 24th of June, no man, I think, will be bold enough to say, that it is absolutely certain that the Bank will be able to pay cash for its notes when that day arrives; and if the contrary should be the case, and no precaution be taken to provide against the efforts of such a misfortune, there would be no other resource, but to prolong the time for paying cash, which would infallibly depreciate the value of the notes, and bring on a more certain and more rapid run upon the Bank, whenever its doors are opened. It seems to me, therefore, a matter of common prudence, to provide immediately an effectual remedy against such an alarming misfortune, and that remedy, I think, is a very plain and obvious one, that of passing an act for opening an immediate subscription for another bank, whose operations should commence on the day after the period fixed for the Bank to pay its notes in cash; but not to commence at all, in case the Bank should, on that day, recommence its usual payments in cash, and continue to pay cash freely for a certain number of days after it opens.

I have not been able to learn what reasons can be assigned against such a measure of precaution, which could do no possible harm, if the Bank should be able to resume its usual practice; and on the other hand, would secure the public

against the dreadful effects of the possible inability of the present Bank to pay cash. This subscription, I would propose, should be equal to ten or twelve millions, and, by passing the act immediately, the subscribers would have time to make their arrangements, and be ready to act on the day they are allowed to open. It has been said, however, that no subscriptions could be obtained for such a new bank, as none of the present bankers, or considerable merchants, would engage in it; and I am ready to admit, that such is the dominion of the present Bank, and so great is the dread of its power, by every merchant, banker, and trader, in this metropolis, that I do believe neither their strong wish for the public prosperity, in which their own is involved, nor the object of great gain from the establishment of such a bank, would induce them to expose themselves to the resentment of the present Bank, if it should be able to open again, and to continue its monopoly; but there seems to be an easy method of obtaining the object, without exposing any person to resentment. The act might provide, that the subscriptions should be taken in at the Exchequer, by a committee sworn to secrecy, and the mode of subscription to be, by putting into the slit of a box, with three locks, a sealed paper, containing the name of the subscriber the sum subscribed, and the names of the first directors for whom he votes. These papers might be sent by any person, or by post, to be put into the slit, without the possibility of tracing from whence they came; and if the present Bank should really open, on the day appointed, and be able to continue to pay freely for a week or ten days, that then the box, without being opened, should be put in the fire. I have very little doubt, that a very large subscription would be obtained by such means, and that the effect upon public credit would be complete, in case the present Bank should prove unable to open at the time fixed.

Whatever language the bankers and merchants may feel themselves obliged to hold, yet no one can believe that they have any satisfaction in being, and continuing, under a dominion which has proved so grievous and so disastrous; and whether the conduct of the Bank has proceeded from error or design, is of little consequence, since the mischief has been universally felt. I shall never believe that the merchants and bankers of this coun-

try will prove unwilling to emancipate themselves, if they can do it without risking the resentment of the Bank. No man was heard in France to complain openly of the Bastile, whilst it existed. The merchants and bankers of this country have the blood of Englishmen, and will be happy to relieve themselves from a situation of perpetual terror, if they can do it consistently with a due regard to their own safety. We have been told that public credit may be revived in the present Bank, and that we ought to wait till we are convinced that it cannot be restored in that manner. But no one can say, with certainty, that will be so revived; and if we wait till convinced that it cannot be done, the kingdom must be involved in the most serious calamity. The public safety is too important a matter to admit of the exercise of delicacy upon a point of so much moment. Nobody, I believe, has ever pretended to say, that there would be any breach of public faith in establishing another bank, in case the present Bank should not resume its payments at the time now to be fixed; and in the mode proposed, the new bank would not be enabled to act, if the present Bank should recommence and hold out; but I am fully persuaded, that if such an act should pass, and that the proprietors of the present Bank were convinced that they could not possibly recommence at the period fixed, they would see it to be their interest, to make an offer of giving up their monopoly, upon condition, that their charter as a corporation should be continued, and that they would request that the new bank should commence its operations as speedily as possible, because that would be an effectual means of supporting the credit of the present Bank.—An objection was made against the establishment of another bank, that it might be considered as a breach of faith to the public creditors, whose payments are directed to be made at the Bank. But, in the first place, if this Bank continues a corporation, the payments to the public creditors may still be continued to be made there, provided the Bank pays cash for its notes; but all question of faith to the public creditors would be easily removed, by permitting such creditors, as declared their assent in writing, to be in that case paid at the new bank, and the others to continue to be paid at the present Bank.

When I consider the magnitude of this

matter, and the facility with which the public credit might be restored, I cannot help complaining of the right hon. gentleman, that he has shown no inclination, but much to the contrary, to give any aid in producing so important an effect. It seems to me to have been his duty to have prepared the public mind for the attainment of such an object, and to have endeavoured to remove those prejudices, which very naturally prevail, and ought to prevail, in favour of old institutions. His neglecting to do it, must either have proceeded from not fully understanding the subject, or from unwillingness to risk any degree of unpopularity, which might at first attend a measure of the kind. I am sure he would run no risk of unpopularity, if he was willing to face the danger; and with regard to the right hon. gentleman's not understanding the subject, I believe the House will not be apt to think so ill of his talents and ability. I now move, that the words "24th of June" be left out of the bill, for the purpose of introducing the words "6th of May," as the period when the Bank should recommence the payment of cash for its debts and demands.

Mr. Pitt said, he conceived this was not the time for entering upon the various topics which the House had just heard touched upon. He therefore would not follow the hon. baronet through the history of the Bank, or discuss the question, what effect one bank had on one part of the island, compared with that which two had upon another? but only say, that the great benefit which had been derived from both, would prevent him from inquiring which of the two was the best. The hon. baronet intended his speech rather to prepare the House for the practical development of opinions which he entertained; but when he assumed that his majesty's chancellor of the exchequer was wrong, in not preparing the public mind for the reception of opinions which, so far from having entertained before, he did not even now entertain, the hon. baronet assumed too much. If, like the hon. baronet, he had been for several years convinced of those points, he would have been blameable indeed not to have disclosed them: but till he had formed those opinions, he could hardly be said to be wrong in not expressing them. The hon. baronet could mean his speech only to prepare the House for the measures he had to propose on a future day; for he

had himself virtually acknowledged that he did not mean to apply it to the question of time, having said that it was no matter whether the time was limited to the 6th of May or the 24th of June. But let the opinion of the hon. baronet in that respect be what it might, Mr. Pitt said, he still adhered to the opinion, that the House could not with propriety or safety to the Bank assign them a shorter time for resuming their operations.

Mr. Fox agreed that this was not the time to discuss the topics before the House. On many of them he disagreed with the hon. baronet; in one, however, he perfectly coincided; namely, that there was a necessity for some paper circulation, convertible on demand into money. He was a friend to the shorter period; for if the hon. baronet's plan, or any other should, on consideration, be found eligible, the sooner it was adopted the better. It was impossible to put the Bank on its old footing; but it would be put nearer to it by limiting the period to the 6th of May, than postponing it to the 24th of June. The Bank might resume its former operations, but could not regain its former credit. There was no way of restoring the credit of the Bank but by shortening the duration of the bill.

Mr. S. Thornton said, that if the Bank had brought the country into thralldom, he should be as ready as the hon. baronet to say it ought to be removed. The hon. baronet had stated, that the Bank was not adequate to the demands upon it. This he denied, and protested, that the restriction did not arise from the operations of the Bank itself, but from other causes, which he was not at liberty to describe. The worthy baronet had complained of the diminution of coinage in late years, but he had not stated to what that diminution ought solely to be attributed. It was occasioned by a proportionate scarcity of bullion in the country, which of course confined the coinage. As to the compact which was said to subsist between government and the Bank, during the eight years in which he had been connected with the Bank, he knew of no partiality whatever, and in regard to salaries, in the course of that time he had endeavoured faithfully to discharge his trust without the least unfair emolument.

The motion was put, "That the original words should stand part of the bill;" which was agreed to without a division. The bill was then passed.

Debate on Mr. Pollen's Motion for Peace with France.] April 10. Mr. Pollen rose to make his promised motion. When he viewed around him so many gentlemen with the same opportunities with himself of taking lead in the discussion of this evening—gentlemen of greater age, and of much longer experience—he almost shrunk from the task which he had imposed upon himself. When he looked at the other (the opposition) side of the House, he could not withhold his admiration, from the talents of which many who sat upon it were possessed; but he regretted extremely that they were so often employed for the purposes of self-interest, and that the good of the public was so frequently sacrificed to the illiberality of party spirit. The consequence was, that the debates were conducted with so much acrimony, and intermingled with so much personal invective, that even the Speaker must have found it difficult to pursue the thread of the argument, and to preserve order and decorum in their proceedings. It was not for the empty hand to blame the prodigality of the full one, or for the person sitting safe upon the top of a rock and viewing the ship tossed by the winds and the waves, rashly to censure the conduct of the pilot. It was to be recollected, that though the present minister had sitten at the helm while the vessel of the state was exposed to storms and tempests, and though the ship had sustained considerable damage from the accidents which had befallen it, the pilot, perhaps, might not be to blame, and that had it been in other hands, instead of being shattered, it might have been sunk. Instead of indulging in idle complaints or peevish invective, at the present crisis every hand ought to be active in the service of the country, and every heart should glow with an ardent desire to extricate it from its present embarrassments.—Having said this much in general, he proceeded to state the situation in which the country was placed. Having commenced the war in concert with several of the most respectable and powerful nations in Europe, we were deserted almost by all our former friends, and had now to contend against some who were at one time our allies. Instead of carrying our arms to the enemy's door, we were in daily terror of invasion. Instead of calculating upon the ruin of the finances of our adversary, our whole attention was confined to the restoration of our credit, and the salvation of

our independence. He was convinced, that the people of France were as earnest in their wishes for peace as the people of Great Britain. It might be asked, perhaps, if they were so desirous for the termination of hostilities, why did they not carry their complaints to the bar of the Directory, and demand redress. To this he would reply, that they were taught to consider the ambition of England as the sole cause to which the prolongation of the war was to be ascribed, and that to her thirst for aggrandisement, the happiness of Europe was sacrificed. And, if this was the case, would a British House of Commons permit that England, the parent of commerce: that England, the source of every proud and every generous feeling, and the bright example of regular government and salutary regulation, should be branded as the interested author of all the calamities which were at present abroad in the world? He trusted, that, on the contrary England would vindicate her character in the face of Europe, and that it would be shown, that the aspersion in this instance was as untrue as it was contradictory to her past history; and that even her enemies would be taught to look to her as the source of their advantages.—But it was not merely our character but our interests which were at stake. Public credit was shaken to its very foundation, and peace alone could restore it. It might be said, that the French nation were not sufficiently tranquillized, and that their government was not possessed of stability enough to ensure the blessings of a permanent peace. His majesty had declared it to be capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity; and if there were any who could not adopt this opinion, he would ask, if they wished to persevere in the contest either till the present government of France was completely consolidated, or till a system in which they could repose greater confidence was established upon its overthrow? He advised gentlemen to read the debates in the Council of Five Hundred, and to learn moderation from the speeches of Dumas and Dumolard. As a specimen of the just and proper notions which obtained in that assembly, he referred to the message which was lately sent to the Directory demanding of that body an explanation of what they called an incendiary debarkation of prisoners upon our coasts; a measure which they justly reprobated as inconsistent with the

laws of war. And if these were the sentiments of moderation and justice by which a French assembly was guided, would the House of Commons be less inclined to the exercise of these dispositions? He trusted they would not.—It would, perhaps, be said, that he was one of those who voted for the address to the king on the failure of the late negotiation, and that the motion which he now meant to propose would imply an inconsistency of conduct. In answer to this charge, he remarked, that at that time he reposed unreserved confidence in ministers, because he thought they deserved it. But the face of things was widely different. The Bank of England had not then stopt payment! And in this short sentence was concluded a vast mass of calamity. But, when the credit of the country was gone, and when he thought of his countrymen sinking in the putrid urns of Western pestilence, he must wish for the termination of a system from which such accumulated evils flowed.—Mr. Pollen proceeded to read an abstract from a paper contained in the *Redacteur* of the 24th of December last, which he considered as the official sentiments of the French Directory on the late negotiation for peace. Upon the contents of this paper he did not deliver any opinion.

* The following is a copy of the Paper read by Mr. Pollen.

Abstract of the Arguments used by the French Directory to prove, on one hand, the insincerity and ambition of England in the late Negotiation; and on the other, to prove their own zealous desire of Peace upon moderate terms: taken from the *Redacteur*, December 24, 1796, three days after lord Malmesbury's departure from Paris.

"The Directory sets out by asserting positively, that the war has been on their part a defensive, and not an offensive one; and that peace is the only object of their vows and wishes. In enumerating the strong reasons they had for suspecting the sincerity of lord Malmesbury's mission, they particularly specify the perfidy of England in exciting and supporting interior troubles, both in La Vendée and elsewhere. They mention likewise the forgery and fabrication of false assignats; the studied slowness and want of conciliation, as well as of candour and openness in the mode adopted by lord Malmesbury for commencing a treaty; his want of authority on one hand, from any of the powers allied with Great Britain, while, on the other hand, he

After reading the paper, Mr. Pollen observed, that the allegations it contained were either founded on fact, or wholly false. If they were founded on fact, then the negotiation ought to be resumed on fair and candid principles: if false, the best mode of displaying the justice of the English government to Europe and to the world, and of exposing the unjust pretensions of the enemy, would be to publish a counter declaration, stating the grounds upon which the war was carried on. He called upon the side of the House on which he sat to defend their conduct and the principles on which they acted, by showing the public that it was not the inclination of the minister, but the interest of the nation, which they consult. He called upon the other side of the House not to defend the minister but to defend their country. And he called upon both sides to co-operate in delivering the country from its present difficulties, and to act in such a way that every man in the House might be able to say that he had done nothing of which he was ashamed. He concluded with moving, "That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to represent to him, that it appears to this House, on a mature consideration of the circumstances, and the result of the late negotiation, that his majesty's gracious and benign intentions for restoring general peace, have

affected to include, not only Austria, but even Russia among the parties to be consulted. It might therefore, they say, be necessary to send couriers as far as to St. Petersburg, which, at that season of the year, could not be accomplished, with the answers returned, in less time than five weeks. That lord Malmesbury only proposed a vague principle of compensation, without any specific articles of reciprocal restitution, while their specific demands he only answered by ingenious evasion. They then enumerate the delays of messengers, and a private secretary sent to London; the want of signature to two memorials sent in by lord Malmesbury; and at length, when the *ultimatum* was demanded peremptorily, what does it contain? The first memorial demands, 1st, Restitution to the Emperor of all his territories, without exception, as he held them before the war; consequently, the restitution of Belgium. 2nd, The total annihilation of every treaty made by France with the princes of the German empire, as being fundamentally inadmissible, and contrary to the *Jus Publicum Imperii*, which makes it impossible to treat with any, excepting the head of the German empire. This, they say, would annihilate all the treaties between France and the elector of Hanover,

been either misconceived by the government of France, or ill explained by them to the people of that country: that we therefore humbly beseech his majesty, that he will be graciously pleased, without delay, to adopt such measures as may appear to him, in his royal wisdom, most efficacious for removing every misconception which may have been entertained by the Directory of France, by the French nation, and by all Europe, relative to the sincerity of the intentions, by which the government of this country was actuated in making overtures of peace to the Directory of France."

Mr. Pitt said:—When I consider the motion of the hon. gentleman, and advert to the arguments which he has adduced in support of it, it will only be necessary for me to trouble the House with a few words, to show that no practical benefit can arise from adopting it. The hon. gentleman began with lamenting the evils attendant on war; but until he shall have found a remedy for those evils by new modelling human nature, or have suggested some practicable system by which wars may in future be totally excluded, I am apprehensive the distresses and calamities of war will continue to exist. If the war had been undertaken or conducted upon principles of aggrandizement, or motives of ambition. The hon. gentleman might have dwelt upon the miseries which it has inflicted with more propriety; but as no war, in a civilized nation can, be under-

taken, I trust, before the causes and the consequences of it be well considered, such arguments tend to no practical benefit. Every evil of war is, or ought to be, viewed on the comparison of alternatives; and the wisest mode of preventing the accumulation of them, is to enter into an impartial investigation of their causes, and to inquire whether the immediate evil was smaller than the more remote. Without such a comparison a fruitless lamentation over the misfortunes incidental to a situation of difficulty, is calculated to counteract the exertions of any country, however justifiable or necessary those exertions may be. The hon. gentleman next came to the discussion of the change in the situation of this country, since the return of lord Malmesbury from Paris, after the rejection of the overtures for peace. And here, Sir, I must tell the hon. gentleman, that whatever might be his anxiety for peace during the negotiation of that noble lord, my anxiety was not less ardent than his. The hon. gentleman says, he has reason to suppose, that, suffering as the French people must do under the inevitable horrors of war, they must earnestly desire peace, and on that ground, he assumes, that a paragraph which appeared so long ago as the 24th of December in a French paper tending to shake off from the Directory the odium of the breach of the late negotiation for peace, and to throw it on this country, must have been an official manifesto, and

the duke of Wirtemberg and Brunswick, the Landgrave of Hesse, and, lastly, with the king of Prussia, in his capacity of elector of Brandenburg. 3. The complete evacuation of Italy, including Savoy and Nice. 4th, A reservation in favour of Russia, by which that court may interfere at its pleasure as a contracting party for the peace. 5th, The same to Portugal, and by which likewise France is to be precluded from demanding a sum of money as the price of peace from that court. 6th, Great Britain contests the validity of the cession by Spain to the Republic of the Spanish part of St. Domingo, as contrary to the peace of Utrecht. 7th, The restitution of the property of the emigrants forfeited or sold is obscurely, they say, and indirectly demanded, though in language and terms so ingeniously ambiguous as to leave matter of endless discussion.

What is the second memorial?—For Holland, the British ministry demands a complete restoration of its ancient form of government, the demolition or annihilation of all the treaties between France and the Batavian Re-

public; lastly, the restoration of the statholder to all his dignities, offices, and possessions. And what does England offer as the price of so many concessions, restitutions, and humiliations, on the part of France? The restoration to Holland of all her colonies? The indemnity to the Dutch for the past?—No! She offers only a partial restitution of the Dutch colonies, reserving to herself the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon. Finally, that if France will not consent to annul her treaties made with the Batavian Republic, she is in that case to make over or cede to the Emperor all Holland has ceded to France in the late treaty between the two countries. The Directory then asks. Is this a fair treaty?—Does it not demand from France the entire restitution of all that France has conquered during the war, without restoring all that England has acquired? Does it not stipulate by induction, and by infallible, though indirect and ambiguous means, the return of the emigrants, the restitution of their estates, the destruction of our constitution of 1795, and ensure a counter revolution?"

he farthermore thinks, that something ought immediately to be attempted to do away any impression which the statements in that paper may have on the people of France. Now, Sir, let us examine upon what principle this House is invited to adopt a mode of proceeding so extraordinary. It is invited, not upon any given authority that the statements are actually true, or that they are actually official; not upon any clear and explicit measure proposed, whence only any real advantage can be derived; not upon any solid declaration that specific terms of negotiation on the part of the enemy either have been or will be offered; but it is invited upon a deduction of probable or conceivable facts, and from an uncertain inference of probable or conceivable facts, it seems it may be desirous to address his majesty to adopt such measures as may tend to refute those arguments if they have been mistaken, or to rectify them if they have been misrepresented. It is impossible for any one not to perceive that the hon. gentleman, by quoting from the paper he has referred to, has been misrepresenting the whole proceedings of the late negotiation; for, by passing over some circumstances, and perverting others, he has inferred, that the Directory were conscious, if they published that declaration, considering it, as the hon. gentleman had considered it, to be the true state of the case, that the ministers of this country could not afterwards appeal to the judgment of their countrymen. That the Directory had misrepresented the intentions of this country was evident; and, after treating the overtures as they did, it would surely be a singular ground for parliament to ground any parliamentary proceeding upon, and thereby expose the nation to additional insult. But, above all, it would be singular by a manifesto to refute a declaration which it had no authority to prove official. If any means can be found for restoring tranquillity upon a safe and honourable basis, I trust I am not only sensible of my duty, but impressed with an earnest idea of carrying that sense of duty into execution. If, then, upon minute investigation, it shall appear, that no practicable measure for obtaining a speedy and honourable peace has been omitted; I trust the House will agree with me, that, if the hon. gentleman be neither prepared by his argument nor his specific motion to do what government is prepared to do,

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the one would be superfluous and the other dangerous. I cannot point out the precise effects of any endeavour on the part of this country towards the attainment of peace; but this I think I may be permitted to state; that the prospect of a speedy and honourable peace depends upon a conduct on the part of this House, directly the reverse of that encouragement which would be given to the enemy by the motion of the hon. gentleman. It should never be forgotten, that peace without security is worse than war, and that if the energies of the national character be once lost, to make overtures for negotiation will only be to court renewed indignity, and to lay the foundation for additional insult. I cannot enter into detail, I have, however, no hesitation in declaring, that the disposition of his majesty's ministers goes beyond the purpose of the motion, and that in consequence of the dispatches which have been received from the court of Vienna, that the enemy had made distinct overtures for a separate peace with his imperial majesty, which he, conformably to his uniform character for good faith, rejected, upon the ground, that he would not enter into any negotiation in which Great Britain was not included, steps have been taken to render this opportunity available for the purpose of renewing a joint negotiation. In consequence of this resolution having been formed, his majesty has determined to send a confidential person to Vienna, with instructions to conduct farther negotiations in concert with his allies. Farther than this I cannot go. But after what I have said, I think the hon. gentleman will be disposed to withdraw his motion, rather than to persevere in a measure, which would tend to defeat the end which it purposes.

Colonel *Porter* distrusted the sincerity of ministers in any negotiation they might undertake, and considered the present as a mere bugbear to delude the public. The motion could do no harm, and therefore it should have his support.

Mr. *J. H. Addington* said, he had flattered himself that, after what had passed, the hon. gentleman would have withdrawn his motion; but as that was not the case, he should trouble the House with a few observations. The hon. gentleman had grounded his motion upon the statements which appeared in a French paper. With respect to the two grounds contained in that paper, viz. our being the cause of the

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war, and the insincerity of the British government in its proposals for peace, he begged to say a few words. In 1792, this country enjoyed a state of prosperity almost unparalleled. Under those circumstances, no man was more interested in the preservation of peace than the chancellor of the exchequer, because the interruption of peace must tend to frustrate those financial arrangements, in which he was so successfully employed. The unwillingness of ministers to interfere in the contest, was incontrovertibly manifested in the May of that year, by their making a very material reduction in the naval and military establishments. But there were some important events that year, which must have made a strong impression upon the government. The defeats of the Prussian army, and the events of the 10th of August, were not sufficient to induce ministers to alter their system; but after the battle of Jemappe, when the empire was threatened, and after the famous decree relative to the Scheldt, they could no longer consider themselves as indifferent spectators, but began to prepare for what might happen. The French convention, placing great confidence in the declarations of the Jacobin societies in this country (and, in his opinion, every man who signed them acted traitorously to his country), declared war against us. This war had now continued for four years; and he would do the gentlemen opposite the justice to say, that if they were really of opinion, that the government of this country could have avoided the war, or had rejected any fair opportunities of procuring peace, they were consistent in their conduct; for they regularly every session brought forward motions expressive of those sentiments. It had been stated, and with triumph, that we were now forced to adopt that very conduct which we formerly rejected; but was there no difference between the present government of France, and those which existed when many of these motions were made? Was France now what France was then? At the period when the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox) brought forward one of his motions for peace, the faction of Robespierre prevailed: within six weeks after the motion was negatived, that faction ceased to exist. Suppose, for a moment, the House had adopted the motion, and that ministers had succeeded in a negotiation, the result must either have proved favourable or unfavourable. If the latter

had been the case, who was there among the minister's friends that would have ventured to defend him? If it had terminated in a peace, the consequences would have been still worse; for the succeeding faction had repealed every one act of his reign. What, then, would have been the situation of this country, if, in the confidence of peace, we had repealed the alien bill? We should have exchanged a foreign contest for a civil war; and we should again have been forced into a war with France. The decision of the House, therefore, in rejecting that motion, was founded in wisdom and policy. Another hon. gentleman had brought forward a motion for peace, at a period at no great distance from the former. It was brought forward soon after the convention had declared, that they would make peace with those powers who were not aggressors in the war; that they would make peace with Holland, but not with England. It was then that they avowed that horrid principle—that treaties might, and sometimes ought, to be violated. This was first broached by M. Brissot. This was the period chosen for the second motion for peace. Peace was seldom made between two belligerent powers, except under one or other of the following circumstances: either when both parties were tired out by the war, and sought an opportunity of making their pacific sentiments known to each other; or where one party was so completely beaten, as to be obliged to sue for peace. He trusted we were not in the latter situation: our resources were not so exhausted that we must beg for peace. He desired to know by what act of the convention, or any of the governing powers of France, a disposition for peace had been shown, from Barrère, Robespierre, Tallien, or the Directory? During what was called the moderate period, after the destruction of Robespierre, many persons entertained strong hopes that they would manifest a desire for peace. He never entertained such an opinion, and was not disappointed; for the same system of resentment was displayed against this country.—When the separate peace was made with Prussia, the reporter stated to the convention, that they had made a separate peace in obedience to their orders. If any farther proofs were necessary, look to their conduct in the last campaign, when it was evidently their object to compel the Emperor to a separate peace, and with the

same view was their last offer to that monarch. These offers were rejected with a spirit that did the highest honour to the royal faith and magnanimity of our ally—of that ally whom we had been called upon to desert. As long as there was no regular government in France—no government that could have afforded us any security for a peace—ministers acted right in not attempting a negotiation. But the first moment that a government was established, that appeared capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity, his majesty declared from the throne, that a favourable change had taken place, which might lead to a negotiation. This was followed by a message from the throne, declaring that the principal bar to negotiation was now done away. It was unnecessary to recall to the recollection of the House the proposal of Mr. Wickham at Basle, or the negotiation of lord Malmesbury; of which last he should only observe, that the French had never thought proper to contradict the statement given by that noble lord. If, under the present circumstances, we were to make any application, the enemy might suppose we were driven to it from the recent circumstances relative to the Bank.—It had been said, that the members of that House had lost the confidence of their constituents. How did that appear? What was the cause of it? Was it from doing too much or too little with respect to the internal defence of the country? for ministers had been accused of both. Was it for the satisfaction they expressed, when the negotiation opened to them the prospect of a peace? Or was it at the concern they manifested when those negotiations were broken off? Looking, then, at the situation of the country as he did, conceiving her to be possessed of abundant wealth, notwithstanding our temporary embarrassments, he was satisfied we had only to act with spirit, and we should find ourselves strong and rich. On the other hand, if we displayed unseasonable parsimony or pusillanimity, we should find ourselves both weak and poor. He hoped they would not adopt a policy, which would only tend to degrade the character of the country. He should always be of opinion, that interest was inseparably connected with honour. He trusted that the commerce and wealth of the country would not induce them to adopt timid measures. If the burdens under which we now laboured had so dis-

couraged the people as to take away the spirit which we had hitherto manifested, then indeed it was time to beg pardon of the French, and to throw ourselves on their mercy. But he was sure there was no such despondency in the country. Some little gloom there might be, but it had not pervaded all ranks of men. Much had been said of the calamities of war, and of the comforts attending a state of peace. Nobody but a madman could hesitate between the two, if left to his free choice; but if compelled into the war, then all this was mere declamation, tending only to unnerve the arm of the country. The House of Commons were anxious for peace, and so were the ministers. He only hoped they would not retard it by their anxiety to obtain it.—It had been asked, what we had gained by this war? Those who asked that question should recollect, that this was a defensive war, and, therefore, that was not a proper question. But we had retained our character; we had achieved great conquests; we had made a fortunate discovery of easy and successful means of preserving internal tranquillity; and we had found out a good mode of manning the navy. We had nearly destroyed the marine of France, and had given a severe blow to that of Spain; and in all our other naval transactions, the glory of our flag had been carried to a higher pitch than ever it had been before. We had, in a great degree, quashed those dangerous principles which were abroad, and secured our honour, our liberty, and, he trusted, our constitution. These were some of the advantages we had gained by the war; and on these grounds he should vote against the motion, and move the order of the day.

Mr. Fox said:—It would be difficult for me, consistently with my duty, to give a silent vote upon the question. After all that this country has suffered, and after contemplating the calamities that are impending, we have to consider whether we will address the throne for the purpose of facilitating peace, which I think, which I trust this House, which I know this country thinks, is the only means of repairing our misfortune, and averting our ruin. What is it that is now stated to the House by those who oppose this motion? What does the minister himself, who has had so large a share in producing your present calamities, and who, therefore, ought to feel for them, propose to you this night?

What, but that you should continue that confidence in him which has brought you to those calamities; that you should continue that forbearance which is the source of your misfortune: that you should still trust to those counsels which have been so fatal. He is for ever the same character, although he comes before you in different shapes. When he is called upon by those who are the most willing to trust him, to take some step that may lead to peace, he comes forward with a promise that he will do so, nay, that he is actually doing it. Promises you have had from him in abundance, but not one of them has he fulfilled. We are told this day as I understand, that the city of London was informed in the morning, that a gentleman in a confidential character is going to Vienna, the object of whose mission would be explained this evening to the House of Commons. How far that has been explained, I leave gentlemen to say. But, it seems, Mr. Hammond, of whose abilities I have no doubt, is going to Vienna, and upon this the minister expects you to stop at once in the performance of your public duty. He is going upon the subject of peace, and under that general head, supposing his employers to be sincere in desiring to forward that event, he would go with the unanimous wish of the people of this country. But upon that sincerity I have great doubts. What is the reason, then of this embassy? I am afraid it is too much like that which took place last summer. When the French arms were victorious; when the situation of the Emperor was critical, as admitted by all; desperate, as thought by many; then you took a step similar to that which is now about to be taken, and that was afterwards followed by your sending a negotiator to Paris. I know that some persons choose to forget the dates and circumstances of these events: seeing that when lord Malmesbury was sent to Paris, the French had met with some defeats. That we were in a state more prosperous when that noble lord went to Paris than we had been some time before is true; but when the measure was taken that led to that embassy, we were in a situation the most disastrous. I will not question, because I have no means of proving, how far the minister was sincere when he adopted that measure; I am inclined to think he was sincere in his endeavours to make peace when it was impossible for him to make a good one; for I know there is a natural con-

nection between haughtiness and meanness; and under the terms he was sent, it was as impossible to obtain a good peace, as if he had not been sent to Paris at all.— But there is another point to be considered with regard to that embassy: it took place when there was a loan to be obtained, and he continued at Paris until that loan was concluded. We are now at a period in which the French have been victorious, and the Emperor's situation desperate; we are now also to negotiate a loan; and we are now, as we were then, called upon to confide in the professions of the minister. This is the way in which the minister chooses to gloss over the duplicity of his conduct: we are now to negotiate in conjunction with the Emperor, and Buonaparté is to be the negotiator for peace for us both. The minister tells us, "Do not put me under difficulties by your untimely interference. It is a principle, that the House of Commons should confide in the executive government when they are endeavouring to negotiate for peace." To that, as a general principle, I have no difficulty in assenting, although, perhaps, I should not agree with the minister as to the extent to which that principle may be carried. The question is not here, whether any minister, under any circumstances, should have the confidence of this House pending a negotiation? but, whether the present minister, under the present circumstances, ought to have that confidence? And here it is not improper to recur to what happened in this House two years ago; a motion was made by an hon. gentleman, not at all hostile to the present minister in his general line of politics.* What was then the language? The very same that we have heard this day: "Do not vote for this proposition, but trust to me." Then comes the commonplace argument, that every minister must be interested in obtaining peace. I see no reason why that desire should be peculiar to a minister. Was not lord North in the same situation during the last war? Has not every minister been in the same situation? What is there peculiar in the character or situation of the present minister that should lead us to suppose that he is more sincere in his professions of peace than any other minister? Upon the occasion to which I have alluded, the present minister said he should be ready to negotiate whenever the enemy should

* Mr. Wilberforce, See Vol. 32, p. 1.

be capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other powers. What happened then? The minister prevailed on the House to do then what he asks you to do now—to confide in his professions of sincerity. The House did not interpose its authority, which it ought to have done: but did that which it ought not to have done; it confided under an idea that a negotiation would soon take place: no negotiation, however, was attempted. After this, a considerable time elapsed, and then there came from the throne a declaration which stated, that from circumstances which had taken place in France, a negotiation might be attempted. I thought, and I believe the people of this country thought, that the period was much too long before that negotiation was attempted. It was, however, at last attempted, through the medium of Mr. Wickham, and afterwards carried on by the embassy of lord Malmesbury; and the whole conduct of it is so marked, and the public opinion upon it so well made up, that I need not add any opinion of mine upon the subject. It came to be discussed in this House; and we were told, after every means had been made use of to evade all measures that could lead to any serious negotiation, that there was not a heart in England so profligate as to wish, nor a hand so dastardly as to sign, nor was there to be found a man so degenerate as to be the courier of a commission to be sent to France to stipulate for peace. The courier will, and must be found, and, I trust, the hand will be seen that will sign a peace with France. I say we have tried our executive government enough to be confident that we can do no good to our country by trying such means any longer. Let us now try means which we have not tried. My opinion is, that, let who will be the negotiators for peace, certainly still more if the present ministers are to be the negotiators, the chance of obtaining it will be infinitely increased if parliament should give that negotiation the sanction of its vote. If it should appear to be the dictate of parliament, it will give to those with whom you are to negotiate a pledge of sincerity which they have not had; and I think I need not add, that the French doubt the sincerity of our present executive government.

The hon. gentleman who spoke last has gone over the history of the war, and dwelt a good deal on the declaration of the French, in order to show their hostility to

this country. I admit that their declaration proves their hostility to us. But, if we say, there is a reigning faction in France, that is not likely to be favourable to a peace—has not that faction a right to say, while you confide in the minister's professions in defiance of his acts, that there is a reigning faction in Great Britain, that is not sincerely desirous for peace? The expressions of the Directory, as against us, I admit are very strong, and are inconsistent with what England ought to expect; but, compared to the language of the leading faction in the English House of Commons, they are terms of civility, and even politeness; and all that has been said in France, with all the powers of oratory which the leaders there possess, has not produced among the people of that country a greater abhorrence of our executive government, than what has been said by the leading faction in this country. The hon. gentleman says, that if the propositions which were made by me in the time of Robespierre had been adopted, they would have been reversed by the succeeding faction. There is no authority for coming to that conclusion; on the contrary, every measure that was agreed to with respect to external arrangements during the time of Robespierre, has been confirmed and carried into effect by the succeeding faction. "But they have made peace with other powers, and have never seriously thought of doing so with Great Britain." That they should endeavour to make peace with many of the great powers combined against them does not appear wonderful to me, nor that they have succeeded in such endeavours. "But they did not endeavour to make a separate peace with the Emperor." I grant it. But their endeavours against him do not appear to me to be any proof of their extraordinary malice against us, nor does it prove the contrary. It proves only, that they have contended against the Emperor in the way they have, because they have the means of annoying the Emperor more than they have the means of annoying us.

But to return to the question immediately before us. Is there any man in this House, or in this country, who thinks that our chance of obtaining peace will be as good by confiding in the promise of ministers, as if this House came to a declaration upon that subject? Does any man in his conscience believe, that the executive government can be trusted so well in a negotiation for peace without,

as with the injunction of this House? What are we to think of those who talked of marching to Paris, if they do not receive the check of this House in their phrenzy? Does any man believe that, with all our advantages, and the profit we have had by the easy means we have discovered, as we were told by the gentleman who spoke last, of quieting the people of this country, that we shall the more easily obtain peace by trusting to ministers than by interposing the authority of this House to obtain peace? Of these means I trust the people of this country have a proper feeling. We have found out the means of quieting the people of this country by repealing some of the best provisions of the Bill of Rights. Are we really to say to Europe, that this war was carried on to procure these advantages of quieting the people of this country, and that we could only pass these measures when we had a large standing army, which was ostensibly raised against a foreign foe, but which, in reality, was intended to enable our executive government to carry into effect these easy means of quieting the people? I own, I do not think it necessary to congratulate the people on these easy means of quieting them. I have heard it said, that it was wise to sacrifice a part of our liberty to save the remainder; but the part which we have sacrificed appears to be the most material of our constitution.

But let us consider the time in which we are debating this measure. We are not now about to grant millions to the Emperor, to enable him to march to Paris, but to prevent the French, as we are told, from marching to London. This is what I do not believe; but this is the state of the argument as urged by those who oppose this motion. It has been said, that we have had an opportunity of showing the character of the British nation in the present war. I hope that character will always be supported; but I own I think it has been unnecessarily tried. I know of no obligation that we were called upon to show our good faith in this war, at the commencement, even according to the arguments of the minister himself, except with regard to Holland; and there our assistance was not asked for; on the contrary, we were told that our friendship would be more dangerous than our neutrality. I wish for no breach of faith on the part of this country, because I know its honour is highly valuable to its inte-

rest. I wish a peace may be obtained by us conjointly with the Emperor; but between two evils, I have no difficulty in declaring, that a separate peace between the Emperor and France, or between Great Britain and France, would be a less evil to us than a continuance of the war upon the present system. But after all that can be said of the credit of this country, with all the advantages of the sinking fund, it must not be dissembled that you are lower in that respect than at any former period of your history. All your conquests in St. Domingo will never bring back to you the millions that you have squandered, nor restore to you the lives devoted to that part of your service. This may be called declamation upon the general subject of the war, but it is not so. I am not making a general declamation upon the evils of war, but upon the evils which you have specifically sustained. We entered upon this war on the general idea, that all the powers of Europe would enter into an alliance with us. The result of that policy we have seen. France has gained the alliance of Spain, all the power of Italy, and the Netherlands. She has obtained the neutrality at least, I think the friendship, of the king of Prussia. These are the allies which France has gained, to say nothing of Holland. But in addition to these alliances, she has gained an ally which is more formidable to us than all of them together. I mean the national debt of Great Britain. This is an ally that has been increasing from day to day, and will aid the French much more than all the rest united; and be it remembered, that we were told in the outset that this was to be a contest of finance between Great Britain and France. Our confidence in the minister will increase the power of this last and great ally of the French, for the continuance of the war will most rapidly increase our debt.

But, it seems, "the French will be encouraged if this House should interfere and dictate to the executive government." Will they really think worse of your energy, if they find that you are determined to take your own affairs into your own hands instead of confiding to the present minister? Will they really expect to make better terms of peace with the people of England, speaking to them through the medium of their representatives, than with the present executive government? Do they expect more real care of the interest of the people of Eng-

land from a reigning faction, than from the people themselves, speaking through the medium of their representatives? I apprehend the contrary; and that, as we should expect more justice from the French people themselves than we do from any faction among them, so would they from Great Britain; and in that view I should hope, that neither the republic of France would be hostile to Great Britain, nor the limited monarchy of this country be hostile to the just claims and true interests of the republic of France. I wish to know what better pledge you could give of sincerity to France in your desire for peace, than to tell them by a vote of the House of Commons, that you are willing to negotiate; and what is more likely to lead to a restoration of tranquillity upon a solid and permanent foundation? I do not wish to go now into the question of the terms of peace. I know, as well as the minister does, that they cannot now be discussed here; but I believe I may say without danger, that although Belgium was once considered as the cause of breaking off the negotiation for peace, there would not be much difficulty now between the parties upon that subject. I am afraid it is as little necessary now to say much about Holland. I am afraid, too, that disputes will be superfluous as to what part of Italy the Emperor shall possess. I am afraid that the good sense, or, if you please, the crying voice of the people of Great Britain, will not disturb you much in consequence of any concession you may make to France upon these points that were once so much an object of your contention. But, then, are you to sue for peace? I hope you will never be compelled to do any thing that shall have the appearance of meanness. But surely you should look at your situation; no man thinks that this war is to continue for ever. I will not state any thing that appears to be extravagant, or that is likely to shock you; but I should suppose that I allowed you a tolerable length of time if I allowed you ten years to carry on the war. Now I would ask if there be a man among us who thinks, that in the course of ten years you will be likely to stand upon better ground for negotiation than you do now? Supposing, then, France to lose all that she has gained in the present contest, to lose the friendship of Prussia, to lose the alliance of Spain, to lose the Netherlands, to lose Holland, to lose the power she now possesses in Italy,

and that all these powers were to turn, as if by magic, into alliance with you, do you believe that even in such an event, extravagant and insane though it be to expect it, do you believe, I say, that this new ally of the French, the national debt of Great Britain, would not be equal to them all? One campaign more will add at least forty millions to your debt: do you believe then, I say, that you will have better terms of peace than you may have at this moment? I have put the case as if you could command victory at all points, just in proportion as you have lost it upon the continent, almost without exception since your disaster at Dunkirk. I say nothing against the valour of the Austrian arms; but I ask, if I am stating any thing unreasonable in the rational prospect of your affairs? But it is said that the people of England should not despond; and that there is a gloom at this moment over our affairs, which is not warranted by the real state of them. I believe the people of England to be a grave, sober, and sensible people, not easily driven to despondency. But, when they see ministers day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, plunging them into an abyss of ruin; when they see that ministers at one time talk triumphantly, and call for confidence and money to march to Paris, and then again call for more confidence and more money to prevent the French from marching to London, I cannot much wonder even at their beginning to doubt the propriety of the career of those who thus load them. Let the people of England be fairly described. Let them be called gloomy, if you please; desponding, if you please; but above all things let them not be called impatient. What have they not been told that is false? What have they not suffered? and yet without any symptom of impatience. Do not, therefore, let us mock or insult them. I hope it will be shown this night, that we are determined to represent the sense they have of their own affairs, and that we will no longer confide in the minister who has so often and so shamefully deceived them; but that, like representatives, we will take their affairs into our own hands, and speak their general wish for the restoration of peace in the only manner in which it is likely to be effectual. I know that the people of this country have long wished for peace. Every man, therefore, in this House, who is of that opinion, should de-

clare it this night by his vote. If you trust to the professions of the minister, you will be deceived, as you have been. Declare your opinion to be in favour of peace, and the people of this country will not fail to keep you in countenance. They have spirit enough left, notwithstanding the attempts that have been made to deprive them of it, to enforce such a declaration, whatever the minister may think of it. Should this House come to the declaration which is now before you, does any man, who is the representative of a county; does any man who is the representative of a manufacturing city or town; does any man, who is the representative of any populous place in this kingdom, fear that his constituents will disapprove of his conduct? Do you not, on the contrary, all know, that they will thank you? Would any man in this House be ashamed or afraid to meet his constituents to-morrow, after having voted for this motion? Does any such man think that an explanation of his conduct to his constituents will be necessary? But what will they do who vote against this motion? Why, they will say that, indeed, they are friends to peace; but that they did the best they could to obtain it, by leaving the subject in the hands of the executive government. There is nothing which they will not say in order to convince the public that they are favourable to peace; and they will be believed in their assertions, pretty much in the same manner as those are who profess to be advocates for the abolition of the slave trade, while they vote for its continuance. Do not let us imagine that we can deceive the public by our professions. They are too much enlightened, and they feel too much to be imposed upon by us. Let us not perpetually talk of wishes for peace; let us do something towards obtaining peace; let us vote for peace. Let us not content ourselves with saying we are friends to peace; let us not trust to ministers; that we have done much too long; now let us act for ourselves!

With regard to the particular words of this motion, perhaps had I penned it, I might have chosen other words, because I am of opinion it does not go quite far enough; but upon that score I do not see any thing material to object. I am sure, that if you adopt it more will be done than you can hope to do by confiding in the minister. It desires the king to explain the reason why negotiation has not been renewed. I am sure that is neces-

sary in the opinion of all Europe, for the reasons hitherto assigned have been much too equivocal. The minister says, that the French have misrepresented the conduct of our executive government in the late negotiation. I do not know that they have not; but an explanation will do us no harm. I believe that lord Malmesbury was instructed to insist on the French giving up Belgium as a *sine qua non*. I believe, too, that such is the general opinion of Europe. The minister is always explicit in this House no doubt, since he convinces the majority of it; but with all his command of words, it must be confessed, that, out of this House, no man is more unfortunate in his explanations. The French Directory misunderstand him, the contractors for the loan misunderstand him, the bankers misunderstand him, the lord lieutenant of Ireland misunderstands him, and even the directors of the Bank of England, who take notes of his conversation, for the express purpose of being accurate, misunderstand him! I wish, therefore, in future, that in all public affairs he would condescend to employ some other person whose knowledge of words is more upon a level with the rest of mankind than his own, in order that men of ordinary capacities may stand a chance of comprehending his meaning. I shall only add, that, above all, the consideration you should have in your minds this night, is the hitherto admirable, if not astonishing patience of the people of England, under all the calamities which the minister has heaped upon them, and the duty which you owe to them, to speak their wishes for peace.

Mr. Pitt said:—Sir; I hope for the indulgence of the House while I offer a few reasons for giving my vote in favour of the order of the day. Many of the topics on which the right hon. gentleman has argued, have digressed from that which was admitted to be the real state of the question by the right hon. gentleman himself. The right hon. gentleman stated, in the early part of his speech, that the question for the consideration of the House is, whether the prospect of peace was likely to be more accelerated by leaving it to government to act in such a manner as seemed not likely to produce that effect, or whether it is proper for the previous declaration of parliament to be given upon the subject. If this be the question, it

is the more unnecessary for me to enter into particulars; for it appears, that however we may differ on some of the points, on the general conclusions to be deduced from them, we are perfectly agreed. The right hon. gentleman has taken some pains to prove, that there is throughout the country a wish for peace. Sir, this is a point which the right hon. gentleman might well have spared himself the trouble of arguing; it is admitted that it must be the general wish to attain so desirable an object; but it is not the wish, either of this House or of the public, to procure that unqualified, unconditional peace which has been hitherto held out to us. It is not the wish of the country, to obtain a peace by the surrender of our honour, our good faith towards our brave ally, and our national character. The right hon. gentleman has argued, that whoever would best discharge his duty to his constituents, must vote for the address; and he asks, who is there who would be afraid to meet his constituents, and tell them he had so voted? Sir, whether our constituents would approve all that is done by their representatives is a subject unconnected with the present question. Whether they wish for peace or not, makes no difference with respect to the propriety or impropriety of voting on the same side with the right hon. gentleman; but there may be this difference with regard to the effect of such a vote, namely, whether it would be more likely to accelerate or retard a peace, and how far it would tend to affect that peace, by rendering the terms of it more or less favourable to this country. The right hon. gentleman thinks it the more likely way to promote the success of a negotiation for peace, to accede to the motion for the address. But does the right hon. gentleman think, because this opinion is decisive in his own mind, that he has a right to anticipate the opinion of every other member? Does he think that he alone has a right to judge which is the way to obtain a particular object in the most advantageous manner? Does he take himself to be such a complete representative of the people, that he has a right to denounce the vengeance of their constituents on those representatives who act according to their own sentiments, and in opposition to those of the right hon. gentleman? Sir, I will tell him, that if any one is convinced that the original motion is improper, however he may fall

into an offence for adopting an opinion which, in the eyes of the right hon. gentleman, must have the effect of retarding the negotiation—if there is any member who thinks we have a better chance of obtaining a peace soon, by leaving the conduct of it to the discretion of the executive government, rather than to the control of parliament, a control which is contrary to the fundamental principles by which such negotiations are conducted—if there is any member who does not think that object so likely to be forwarded by the language of the right hon. gentleman, I nevertheless think such member may go to his constituents, and tell them, that he has not voted contrary to the opinion of the right hon. gentleman upon slight or superficial consideration; but that he has viewed the subject, with reference to the mode by which a solid and permanent peace might be accelerated, and its effects improved; and having done so, he may justly say, on this ground, I claim the continuance of your future favour and confidence. This is the ground on which I feel every man should act. This is the ground on which I am sure every impartial member in this House will judge. Sir, if the right hon. gentleman means that we should forward a peace, provided it is on admissible and honourable terms, he certainly is arguing a point which he needed not have troubled himself with, for it is universally admitted; but if his argument leads to the conclusion, that we are driven to the necessity of submitting to any terms proposed to us, though ever so arrogant; that the situation of the country is such, that there are no sacrifices which we ought not to make; then it leads to a conclusion, which I trust no one will admit the justness of. Sir, if the right hon. gentleman, by arguing on the enormous amount of our national debt, and the extent of the losses of our ally, means to bring the public mind into a temper to say, we are in such a situation that there is nothing we will not surrender; we will give up that sense of honour and faith we have hitherto preserved towards our allies; we will forego our regard for the future security of the country, the very means on which we depend for obtaining a peace likely to be permanent; we will surrender every advantage we possess at the hazard of all that can make a peace available—if this is the object of his argument, I do not believe that we

shall ever hear such language adopted by the country in general. I trust we shall never agree to surrender at the feet of the enemy, that which is necessary to the security of the country, and to the permanence of peace; and I have the satisfaction of believing, that whatever may be the arguments of the right hon. gentleman, there is no such sentiment in his own mind.—The question comes to this point, whether the House, after what has been heard, can be of opinion that a peace on admissible terms is likely to be attained sooner by the present motion. The right hon. gentleman began by saying, there was no reliance to be placed on the declarations of his majesty's ministers, and that the declarations now made in opposition to the motion, should be no more believed than the declarations which I troubled the House with before. He stated, that it might be the intention of ministers to treat for peace in a manner similar to the negotiations last year. Now, Sir, as to the terms of the former declaration, the right hon. gentleman, in the first part of his speech, speaks of my declaration, as if it had wholly omitted that part of it which stated, that steps have been taken with a view of making use of the opportunity to renew the negotiations for a joint peace with the Emperor. Sir, the right hon. gentleman states, that it was told to the Bank in the morning, that Mr. Hammond was going to Vienna, and that the general object of his mission would most probably be explained in this House; and he then asks, how has it been explained? I answer, that if such a declaration is made, and the question is, whether such an explanation has been made as is satisfactory, surely it is sufficient, if it appears that the general object to attain which a person is sent, is such as to the persons who send him seems to be most likely, under all the circumstances, to forward a general pacification. Sir, the next part of the argument is, whether we are sending this person to the right place? and I will speak but shortly upon this subject. Is there, let me ask, any way of negotiating with more probability of success, than by sending a person to the very spot where that power is, whose consent is necessary to carrying any negotiation, under the present circumstances, into effect? This is so clear, that I will not trouble the House by any endeavours to prove it. Sir, it is necessary that I should state dis-

tinctly to the House, that the measure of taking steps from hence, in consequence of the separate overtures for peace by the French to the Emperor, with a view to renewing the negotiations, is a measure which was resolved on, when I argued the question relative to the loan to the Emperor. It will be found, that at that very period the measure was in agitation. It, perhaps, may be asked, why I did not at that time mention a circumstance which must certainly have had the effect with respect to convincing the House of the safety of the loan to the Emperor. I answer, if it is to be made a reproach to me, that I did not argue so well as I might have done, I shall hardly think it necessary to discuss such an objection; it is true I waved an argument which I might have used with effect, but I had the good fortune to satisfy the House that my opinion was right, even without the aid of that argument; but if I had used it, I doubt much whether I should have satisfied the right hon. gentleman. Sir, whoever looks to this question, whether with reference to the attainment of peace, or the continuance of war, must see that a loan to the Emperor is a circumstance peculiarly necessary. It is in consequence of the overture to the Emperor, that we have thought it necessary to renew our endeavours; and I know of no circumstance which is likely to counteract our endeavours to attain peace.—The right hon. gentleman has stated, that the conduct of government is such, that it depends on fortuitous circumstances to give it any good effect; but I have heard no proof of this. He has stated, that the terms proposed by lord Malmesbury, failed through our haughtiness; but he seems to have used this assertion, merely to have an opportunity of coupling it with the invidious reflection of meanness in negotiating, when in a state of adversity, and ceasing afterwards to negotiate, when the affairs of the Emperor were more prosperous. Sir, how this can be construed into an act of haughtiness or meanness, I am at a loss to determine.—What is the next point? The right hon. gentleman is afraid that ministers will not sufficiently endeavour to promote a peace, and therefore he wishes to give the negotiation the sanction of this House. But how does it appear there is any room for such an assertion? The pacific intention of government has manifested itself on every occasion. His majesty's mes-

sage expressly stated, that he anxiously looked for the moment when a change of the disposition of the enemy would enable him to renew his negotiation for peace. The king, in his declaration, made an authentic act in proof of this observation. He closed it with a solemn assurance to all Europe, that in spite of the haughtiness of the enemy, he was determined to renew such negotiations. Sir, I will assert, that never was the judgment of the House more supported by the general opinion of the whole nation, than with regard to the sincerity of his majesty's ministers in the negotiation, and that its failure was owing to the exalted pretensions of the enemy. I do not believe there is a man in the country who can entertain a doubt of our wish to promote a permanent and honourable peace with France; but whether it be right for parliament to interfere, and determine how the negotiation for peace shall be conducted, is a point I must leave to the House to determine. The motion does not state any specific act, or what particular terms shall be adopted. But if ministers were now insincere, what would the motion do to cure that evil? It left them, with regard to their will, just where they were before—it was therefore a measure puerile, nugatory, delusive, and ineffectual. If ministers are really so insincere and delusive in their conduct as to merit suspicion, I hope the House will advise the throne to remove them. The right hon. gentleman grants that, in ordinary times, the interference of parliament with the functions of the Crown, in the business of negotiation, is wrong, but that now it is right on account of the emergencies of the times. This is extraordinary doctrine indeed; for if in ordinary times it is necessary to abstain from interposition, is it not more necessary to abstain in a crisis so important as the present? Finally as the measure is unnecessary and useless, if not hurtful, as it is unsupported by argument, and ineffectual to any good purpose, I conceive it to be my duty to vote for the order of the day.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, that what the wisdom of parliament and the prudence of the nation should now look for, was, not so much an immediate peace, as a secure one; and this object, he trusted, would be at length accomplished by patience under our sufferings, and perseverance in the contest. He argued favourably of our ultimate success, from the zeal and spirit

that was now springing up in the country. That spirit, while it reflected honour on our national character, would also prove our best protection against an invasion; of which all real danger would be groundless, as long as that spirit continued to animate our exertions. Nor should the state of our finances in the least depress that spirit. He was satisfied that they might be soon retrieved, if ministers were duly anxious for their re-establishment. Our wealth and resources were still immense; and though a temporary embarrassment might tend to disconcert us, was that a sufficient reason to make us submit to lie down and die? On the present occasion, he could not see what advantage was to be derived from a vote of parliament. In the American war, a vote of parliament was supposed to have contributed not a little to the termination of that contest; but there was no comparison to be drawn between that war and the war in which we were now engaged. That war did not threaten our internal peace and security. The present war struck at both, nay, at our very national existence. We had then but comparatively some small advantages to stand out for. We had now to contend with a powerful rival, who pursues her conquests principally in order to cripple our national strength, and finally to sink us into subjection. Where, then, would be the advantages of peace, if that peace was not founded on security? The more money we were supposed to possess, the greater temptation did we hold out to the enemy; and as long as we permitted them to rule along the length of the coast they now held—as long, especially as they retained Belgium and Holland—what security could there be for England? England did not possess half the population of France, nor half the internal resources which that opulent country enjoyed. Our chief defence had hitherto consisted, in France not possessing strong forts opposite our coast. They had spared no labour nor expense in attempts to erect forts opposite Portsmouth; and although they might not in that respect have succeeded, yet by possessing the coasts of Holland, their object was attained. Now then, was the moment to strain every nerve in the struggle; and for his own part, he was more fearful that ministers would be too forward, than too tardy, in bringing it to a termination. His complaint against them was, that on hearing

of the disasters that had lately befallen the imperial arms, they did not immediately come down to the House and call for a loan to re-invigorate the exertions of our illustrious and faithful ally. He could not agree, that terms of reconciliation were so eligible with a rival power, such as the French. They would make no peace, unless Belgium and Holland remained at their disposal. And what could their object be in retaining these countries, unless to keep England in chains? But to this degree of humiliation England would never submit, as long as the breasts of Englishmen contained a spark of the spirit which animated our ancestors. He agreed, that ministers should not be driven to a negotiation by the intervention of parliament. To this the present motion had a tendency, and, as such, he must consider it as dangerous.

Sir John Macpherson wished to state the reasons which induced him to support the motion. This nation and every other nation of Europe, had suffered vast calamities in consequence of the continuance of the war; and the unanimity of the House on the present occasion would be the greatest of blessings. The House, he thought, had forgot the terms of the motion, or there could not have been so much difference of opinion. It only went to this point, to exculpate that House from any participation in the insincerity which had been said to prevail in the late negotiation for peace, and to facilitate any negotiation which ministers might undertake hereafter. He did hope that if the House was not quite unanimous on a question of so much importance, they would at least be unanimous in some degree [much laughter.] Sir John said he was glad he was able to make the House so merry. He had only endeavoured to explain his reasons for supporting a motion which he thought might prove of the greatest utility to the country. It would show that this country was fighting for its rights and liberties, and that we were not the aggressors. It went no farther than to advise his majesty to negotiate upon the grounds on which the war was originally undertaken. It was evident that the French renounced the extravagant system upon which they acted in the commencement of the war, by the inquiry which the legislative body of that country had instituted respecting the felons landed in Wales, and he hoped to have seen a similar spirit of inquiry animate that House.

Mr. Jones said, that no man wished more anxiously for peace than he did; but he was for a peace founded upon the basis of power, and the general security of Europe. Peace might be made as unguardedly as war, and he thought the adoption of the present motion was calculated to place the restoration of that blessing at a greater distance than if it were left to his majesty's ministers. Our ambassador had been dismissed in such an insulting manner from Paris, that for his part he would never propose the renewing of a negotiation with the same persons. This was not the time to appear ready to submit to any terms. In the present critical situation of the country the House ought not to fetter the executive government, but leave them to take advantage of such circumstances as might occur. We had to contend with an enemy who had destroyed or enslaved every regular government within their reach. This country was contending for all that was valuable in society, for expiring humanity, for the present generation, and for posterity.—We were fighting for our God and our king. If we hesitated we were gone for ever, and with us would expire the whole liberties of the civilized world. Upon these grounds he would vote against the motion.

Colonel Fullarton said, that with respect to pacification, which a right hon. gentleman has so ably and truly urged as a desirable object, he will probably not find a dissenting voice from Dover to the Orkneys. But with respect to the mode how, or the time when, that benefit may be procured—with respect to the *quomodo* and the *quando*, on that point he will find *tot homines, quot sententiæ*. For his part, his mind could hardly figure a more unpropitious moment than the present. In the first place, considering the actual state of Great Britain and Ireland, it certainly appears, that any repetition of ambassadorial mission, or diplomatic advances on the part of his majesty to the Directory or cabinet of France, could only tend to expose his majesty's councils, to have their proposals again rejected. When we strip this question of all diplomatic ambiguity, it stands exactly thus—Is this country prepared to admit, that Belgium shall not be restored to the Emperor, and that the Rhine shall be the boundary of France? If you say, aye, then undoubtedly you may obtain terms of accommodation; but if you say, no, then the French will answer—Come and

take Belgium; come and drive us from the Rhine. There again the *quomodo* interposes obstacles, which all the diplomatic powers of lord Malmesbury cannot obviate; nor can they be obviated, unless Mr. Benjamin Garlike, or some other of our diplomatic operators, can prevail on his Prussian majesty to bring against the French, what in the civil law is called *actio finium regendorum*. But before Mr. Benjamin Garlike, or lord Malmesbury receive any new credentials, there are preliminaries respecting the *status quo*; not the *status quo ante bellum*, but the *status quo* before the stoppage of our national circulation, which remains to be adjusted, with a much more despotic and difficult directory than that of France, I mean the *imperium in imperio*, commonly called the directors of the Bank of England. We have all heard of governments overturned by aristocracies and mobocracies, and clubocracies, but now it is bankocracy that threatens the destruction of social order in this country. It is bankocracy that turns and overturns all questions respecting war, negotiation, and peace, and which if not prevented by the vigorous and able interposition of a distinguished baronet (sir W. Pulteney), will infallibly overturn this government.—Before we talk, therefore, of renewing negotiations with M. Delacroix, it is necessary to ascertain the *status quo* with Mr. Giles: it is necessary to restore the credit, confidence, and circulation of this country: it is necessary to obtain the means of rendering this country impervious in defence, invincible in finance. Until these great and important preliminaries are completely ratified, any overtures, or tendency to negotiation with France, would not only be premature, but pernicious. When those great objects are accomplished—whenever the time shall come, that the question of overtures and accommodation can be discussed without impropriety, he would be ready fully to state what he conceived to be the only practicable mode of obtaining reasonable terms of peace. In the mean time, he should only say, that some of the negotiators who have hitherto been employed on the part of this country, have afforded very ample negative instructions respecting those things which ought to be avoided, if our object is, that negotiation should terminate in pacification. He trusted, whenever it should please his majesty to renew negotiations, they would

be conducted in a very different spirit from the unconciliatory temper, and offensive manner with which our diplomatic intercourse had been, on different occasions, conducted on the continent. These are not times for entrusting the most important interests of the country to plenipotentiaries, who entrench themselves behind the ramparts of etiquette, and stalk on the stilts of ambassadorial mightiness; while, at the same time, they are so bandaged and swaddled in the formalities of diplomatism, that if M. Delacroix were to ask them what o'clock it is, they would hardly know how to give him a direct answer, without sending express to England to consult the minute-hand at St. James's. There is one other point, which must not be omitted. It is well known, that the French, from the commencement of the war, have resisted all ideas of treating collectively with the confederated powers. In so doing, they have proved their wisdom; for by treating individually, they have detached every power from the confederacy excepting Austria and England. If the French lose all hope of detaching these powers from each other, they can no longer have the same object left for persisting in that policy; at least, it may no longer be impracticable to devise means for bringing them to treat on general principles, and collective arrangements. This can hardly be effected without a congress in some form or other. Under this impression, he would read such a form of resolutions, as he conceived would meet the object in view; not meaning, however, at all to press them on the House at present:—"Resolved, that it is the opinion of this House, that whenever a proper opportunity occurs, the most eligible mode of establishing the tranquillity of Europe on a secure foundation will be, by assembling a general congress, such as took place last century, previous to the peace of Munster;—that the object of this congress ought to be, to specify and declare to all mankind the principles of right and wrong, which ought to govern the relations between independent states—to specify and declare to all mankind the principles of security, property, and public credit, which it is necessary to recognize and render effectual, before any pacification can be negotiated with stability or honour:—In the event of the belligerent powers not acceding to this opinion, it will become this House to make known the grounds on

which the war is continued, to ascertain the form in which it is to be conducted, and to declare the principles on which a cessation of hostilities ought to be concluded on the part of his Britannic majesty."

Mr. *Western* said, that he was anxious to promote every measure that tended to the restoration of peace, and with that view he would support the present motion.

The question being put, "That the other orders of the day be now read;" the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. Neville - - - }	291
	{ Mr. John Smith - - - }	
NOES	{ Mr. Pollen - - - }	85
	{ Mr. Jekyll - - - }	

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

Debate in the Commons on the Budget.]
April 26. The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means, to which the seventh report of the Committee of Finance were referred,

Mr. *Pitt* said;—In rising to discharge my duty on this day, I feel the weight and severity of the task which I have to perform, arising from the exigencies of the public service, and the various unforeseen difficulties, which have made it necessary for me, contrary to my expectations, to propose a very large addition to the expenditure of the year, and consequently to the taxes to be borne by the people. But, painful as the task is, I feel myself called upon, by motives of imperious necessity, in which I am sure the zeal and spirit of the people will also participate, as they will be convinced that it is only by powerful and extraordinary exertions that they can accomplish the object of their common desire—a safe and permanent peace. I am sure also, that they will do me the justice to believe that, if my former calculations have failed; and if the preparations which were made at the commencement of the session have been inadequate to the pressure of affairs, it is only because they have been obstructed by the obstinacy of an enemy who had resisted all approaches to pacification, and had persevered in the contest in a way that calls upon us for a more enlarged scale of preparation and defence. In the confidence, however, which I have in the resources of the nation, I am not without anxiety, as to the choice which I may make of fit objects of farther taxation. In

the selection of those objects, I have been actuated only by the desire of making them fall as lightly as possible on the great sources of national industry, and on the lower orders of the people.—After a preface to this effect the chancellor of the exchequer entered into the details of the supply, and ways and means for the service of the year. In this, he said, he was greatly aided by the very perspicuous report from the Select Committee on Finance, and which report he would make the basis of the calculations which he should submit to the committee. He should first call their attention to the services which had been voted, or which remained to be voted; he should then advert to the ways and means; and, thirdly, he should propose the specific measures that were yet necessary to complete the service of the year.—He had estimated the ordinary and extraordinary of the navy for the year, at 12,661,000*l*. Of this sum he had provided in opening the supply before Christmas, the sum of 10,161,000*l*. And he had proposed to take a credit, in addition to this, of 3,000,000*l*. making the service of the year for the navy 13,161,000*l*. By this credit of 3,000,000*l*. he made ample provision for every possible exertion, and the report of the committee showed the coincidence of their opinions to be as close as in accounts of such magnitude could be expected, for their estimate amounted to 12,935,496*l*. There was, however, a farther sum which was not included in this estimate, as the value had not yet been ascertained, but which probably might amount to about 800,000*l*. This was the charge on neutral cargoes. It was also to be observed, that part of the navy bills was carried forward, and which give him a sum applicable to this service, by which the vote of credit would be 1,800,000*l*. instead of 3,000,000*l*. In this account of the navy, he had not made any provision for the farther sum that might be required for the pay and maintenance of the seamen, in consequence of the recent event that had happened at Portsmouth. The reason that he had not included this sum was, that it would become the subject of a specific discussion upon an early day.

The next head of service was the army. He had taken the army on the supposition of its amounting for the ordinary 6,229,000*l*. In this, however, had not been included the expense of the foreign corps, amount-

ing to 660,000*l.* and the committee had therefore made the whole of the ordinary of the army amount to 6,897,000*l.* In his opinion the sum of 6,600,000*l.* would cover the whole of the ordinary establishment of the army; but he still wished to take the estimate of the committee. The extraordinaries of the army, as estimated by the committee, amount to 4,137,000*l.* In making this estimate they had looked back to the last year, when they found that they amounted to 3,387,000*l.* which still remained to be provided for. It was in various ways, under the title of treasury bills and army warrants, which previous to the 5th of January amounted to 2,088,000*l.* He observed, that it had been usual to take the extraordinaries of the army as an article of supply for the year subsequent to that in which they were incurred and paid. But now it was proposed to raise the money within the year, and therefore he took the extraordinaries for the present year into his account, as an article of supply; and he accounted for the non-payment of the extraordinaries of last year to the circumstance that many of the advances which had been made by government to which they had looked as a resource, such as the advances to the Emperor, and the advances to the merchants of Grenada, had not been available to the public. In the present situation of things they ought not, perhaps, to look for the repayment of the advances to the Emperor; it was even his intention to make a specific proposition to the committee for a farther advance, distinct from the proposition of a loan. Not thinking it right to risk the chance of repayment, he should propose to add for the extraordinaries of the army 4,000,000*l.*—He took the ordnance at 1,623,000*l.*, but there was to be deducted from this sum the ordnance proportion on the vote for 120,000 men for sea service, being a sum of 300,000*l.* The next article was that of barracks. This head of service would amount to 737,000*l.*—He had estimated the miscellaneous services at 599,000*l.* To this the committee had added the sum of 330,000*l.* making together the sum of 929,000*l.* exclusive of a sum of 600,000*l.* of a loan to persons connected with the islands of Grenada, and St. Vincent's. Under this head also, there would be a sum called for, at no distant period, on an occasion which every gentleman would rejoice in, as it would ever be their eager wish to contribute to

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the happiness of all his majesty's offspring.—The next articles of supply were the usual sum for the reduction of the national debt of 200,000*l.* The deficiencies of land and malt 350,000*l.* A sum to repay the Bank advances made by them 1,054,000*l.* There was also a sum to be repaid to the Bank 1,370,000*l.*, and also an advance, by them on the land and malt of 900,000*l.* He also proposed to repay the sum of 2,177,000*l.* advanced on the growing produce of the consolidated fund, which had been taken at 3,500,000*l.*, but which, from a variety of concurring circumstances, had failed to produce the sum for which it was taken. The payments to the merchants of Grenada, the stoppage of the distilleries, the bounties on the importation of corn, &c. &c. had been the causes why this fund had not been available to the public in the sum at which he had taken it; but these things could not be considered as permanently affecting the revenue. In order, therefore, to relieve this fund, it was thought advisable to repay the Bank the different sums which they had advanced upon this, as well as the other heads of security which he had enumerated, amounting together to about 7,000,000*l.* which would leave the consolidated fund to be immediately available to the public. He would, therefore, take the consolidated fund as an article of supply for 3,000,000*l.* in this way; that was, for 500,000*l.* already advanced to the Emperor, and 2,500,000*l.* of which it was his idea that 2,000,000*l.* should be advanced to the Emperor, to enable him to continue his valuable services. On this he would not propose a vote that night, but would make it the subject of early consideration.—The right hon. gentleman then recapitulated the heads of service which he had gone over, and stated the whole of the supply for the year 1797 to be 42,766,000*l.* He now then came to the Ways and Means. There had already been voted, land and malt 2,750,000*l.*; surplus of grants 420,000*l.*; the loan 18,000,000*l.*; the lottery was estimated to produce 200,000*l.*; and credit was taken in the estimate for a fresh issue of exchequer bills to the amount of 5,550,000*l.* But he said that he did not mean to take credit for exchequer bills to this amount. Notwithstanding the steps that had been taken for issuing them in a new form, it had been found that they would be discredited if carried beyond their present extent. And as he intended to take the

growing produce of the sinking fund at a new estimate, he would only take for exchequer bills 3,000,000*l.*—The next article was, to ascertain at what sum he might confidently take the growing produce of the consolidated fund from the 5th April, 1797, to the 5th April, 1798. He estimated the production of all the taxes, new and old, on the 5th of April, 1798, to amount to 21,703,000*l.* The amount of all the charges both for interest of debt and civil list, would be 19,380,000*l.* Leaving a surplus of 2,323,000*l.*

But for the sake of more security, he should take the consolidated fund at only 2,000,000*l.* This would make 26,370,000*l.* To which add by loan now to be made 16,500,000*l.* The total of ways and means would be 42,870,000*l.* The total of supply 42,766,000*l.* Leaving a surplus of ways and means of 104,000*l.*

But the loan which he had agreed for provisionally was for 18,000,000*l.*, of which sum it was intended that 1,500,000*l.* should be borrowed for Ireland. It was in his contemplation to propose to the committee on a future day to make farther advances to the Emperor to the amount of 200,000*l.* distinct from the loan of 1,500,000*l.* In making his bargain for the loan, therefore, he had a bargain for 14,500,000*l.* certain, of which 13,000,000*l.* were to be provided for at the charge of Britain, and 1,500,000*l.* for, and to be at the charge of, Ireland. He had made a bargain conditionally for 3,500,000*l.* if the committee should agree with him that it would be wise and proper to make a farther loan to the Emperor. In his opinion, it might be done with perfect safety. He could not say that the terms of the loan were advantageous to the public. They were, however, perhaps more favourable than had been anticipated. He had considered the price of the funds on the day when the bargain was made as a price likely to be permanent. He had therefore proposed to consider the 3 per cents consols and reduced, at 50, the 4 per cents at 64, and the long annuity at 14 years. To this, however, the contractors did not seem inclined to agree: they thought that the 3 per cents reduced, and the 4 per cents were taken too high. According to his statement the terms were as follows:

125 <i>l.</i> of 3 per cents consols at 50	62	10
50 <i>l.</i> of 3 per cents reduced at 50	25	0
20 <i>l.</i> of 4 per cents at 64	12	16
6 <i>s.</i> 6 <i>d.</i> long annuity at fourteen		

years 4 11

£.10*l.* 17

Making a bonus to the lender of 4*l.* 17*s.*; but this, though infinitely too high, was not all, for there was also the discount which he had agreed to allow at the rate of 4 per cent. instead of 3, which had been heretofore usual. To all persons, therefore, who took advantage of this discount, it was worth 2 8

£.107 5

To those who did not take advantage of the discount in paying up in full, there was still an advantage by their being entitled to the interest, though they paid their money only by instalments, and this advantage was estimated to be near 2*l.*, so that the bonus was equal to 6*l.* 17*s.* A great and improvident bonus for the public to give, but which, he was sorry to say, under all the circumstances, he could not prevent. The permanent interest on this loan was at the rate of 6*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* per cent, to which, adding for the charge of management, and the redemption fund, the interest would be 8*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.* The whole interest which he had to provide for by additional imposts amounted to 1,234,000*l.*

He should now proceed to state the outline of the sources of taxation, which appeared to be least objectionable for defraying the burthens which we were under the necessity of meeting. In looking at the different branches of revenue, there was one source of taxation which appeared to him to be preferable to any other, because the produce was easily raised, widely diffused, and which pressed little upon any particular class, especially the lower orders of society, and it was the more eligible on this account, that the revenue arising from it, at the same time that it was ample, was safely and expeditiously collected at a small expense. What he alluded to was the general branch of stamp-duties, which though they are now more than double what they were in the American war, have not undergone any considerable increase for some years. His object was to impose an additional duty which would bear upon the great mass of stamps, with the exception only of those which had been lately increased, or of those which from their nature would not admit of any aug-

mentation. The class on which he should propose the greatest addition was that which passed under the name of consolidated stamp-duties by which was meant that class in which stamps of the same denomination were applied to a great number of different instruments, such as deeds, copy-holds, adjudications, and all law instruments. He meant, however, that law instruments should be exempted from the operation of the tax; because, though it certainly was proper as much as possible to discourage litigation, yet, while it might tend to diminish the number of frivolous lawsuits, it might also increase oppressive costs, which, for the sake of justice, ought to be avoided. Besides law instruments, he was of opinion that the probates of wills for small sums should be included in the exception. As a tax upon legacies had been lately imposed, he proposed that they also should be exempted in the present instance. Policies of insurance, however, might bear a small addition, which he calculated at 35,000*l.* Upon the great bulk of the stamps, upon which he proposed that the present tax should operate, he thought that the present duty should be doubled. This source of revenue he expected to yield 320,000*l.*—The next object of taxation to which he looked was transfers of property. He did not mean that the tax on single skins, which now paid a stamp-duty of 7*s.* should be doubled, he only intended that the duty should be increased 3*s.*, that they should pay 10*s.* instead of 7*s.* He had to propose, not only an additional stamp-duty upon each skin, but a scale of duty proportioned to the consideration in money which was transferred. He computed, that by imposing a duty of 4*d.* per pound on all private transfers, a sum would be raised of at least 170,000*l.* per annum.—At present there was a stamp on all Deeds, but he understood that authenticated copies of them, unstamped, were admitted. He saw no reason why the duty should not attach to the copy, as well as to the original. It had been suggested to him, that a regulation of this kind would bring into the revenue 50,000*l.* per annum.—The next article which he should propose for taxation he expected would give rise to a good deal of discussion out of doors; but from the increase of newspapers, which were certainly to be considered as articles of luxury, he thought they might fairly be converted into a source of additional revenue with-

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out hurting the proprietors or editors, and without any oppression to the community. The present tax upon newspapers was 2*d.*, and the price was 4½*d.* As he saw no necessity for adding to the present profits of the proprietors, he proposed that the public should derive all the advantage of an addition to the price, and that 1½*d.* should be imposed as an increase to the stamp-duty on every paper, which he calculated as likely to produce 114,000*l.* per annum. He understood that very different prices were charged for advertisements in newspapers according to their length and the part of the paper in which they appeared, and that the price varied from 4*s.* to as many pounds. From this variation the public at present derived no advantage, but, by introducing certain modifications, and settling a scale of duty for these advertisements, he computed an increase to the revenue of 20,000*l.* per annum.—By establishing certain regulations for the prevention of frauds in eluding the duty upon attornies certificates, he calculated that the public might gain 15,000*l.* per annum.—From an addition to the stamp duty on ornamental plate, he expected an addition to the revenue of 30,000*l.* per annum.—By adopting certain regulations respecting the probates of wills above 300*l.* he expected to raise 40,000*l.* per annum.—These he considered as taxes which were as little painful as any that could be imposed. Though the next measure which he meant to propose might be attended with some speculative difficulties, he was convinced it would be accompanied with very little practical inconvenience; and if it was adopted, no doubt could be entertained of its being extremely productive. The measure had been discussed before; and though it had been withdrawn, he did not hesitate again to submit it for consideration. It was an additional tax upon carriages of every description, by imposing increased rates of tolls, qualified by exceptions of those tolls where there was not a reasonable interest arising from the profits upon the sum laid out, such as in the cases of tolls recently established, and also with an exception of those who are now exempted from paying toll. But with these exceptions, he should propose to double the subsisting toll. When this measure was in agitation about fifteen years ago, it was calculated that it would produce 500,000*l.* He had obtained pretty accurate information of the

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produce at the turnpikes in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, from which he was enabled to form an estimate of what the tax might reasonably be expected to produce. Computing that the horses, carriages, waggons, &c. in the metropolis, formed about a tenth of the horses, carriages, and waggons in the kingdom, he computed that the produce of the tax might be 450,000*l*. He was aware that a tax of that nature was liable to objections; but when it was considered how lightly it would fall in particular cases, and how little it would add to the price of articles of carriage to the consumer, or diminish the profits of the manufacturer, he felt no difficulty in submitting it to the committee for their consideration.—The additional taxes he had proposed would, he calculated, produce 1,284,000*l*.—Mr. Pitt concluded with moving his first resolution.

Mr. Fox said:—The subject now proposed to the consideration of the committee, is of such serious importance, that I think it unnecessary to apologize for following the right hon. gentleman through the various statements he has made, and offering my reasons for differing most essentially in opinion with him, not only with regard to the state of the finances of the country, but also with respect to the deductions which he has endeavoured to establish from the positions which he has brought forward. The road, Sir, we have to travel is not beset with flowers, but opens to our view a comfortless and dreary prospect; and, while we rashly continue to pursue it, we are deprived of every means of avoiding the precipices with which it is on every side surrounded. I entreat gentlemen to compare the statements they have heard this day from the right hon. gentleman, with those with which he has, on former occasions, but too successfully, deluded them. But however specious his financial calculations have formerly been, they are even exceeded in delusion by his statements made this day, which I maintain are altogether unprecedented in the history of finance. The right hon. gentleman came forward in December last, and having succeeded in obtaining a supply of 18 millions, he now repeats the experiment, and calls on us for the same sum. But how has he prefaced this sudden and extraordinary demand? He has declared, that the task of applying to the House, after so short an interval, and for so large a sum, is

irksome and painful to him, and that he has been disappointed in his views. That he has disappointed us by this unexpected application, I most readily admit; but what particular disappointments the right hon. gentleman may have experienced, which compels him to have recourse to our liberality, after the recent and most convincing proof we have already given of it, or which can justify his applying for this enormous sum, I am at a loss to conceive. Does he forget the language which he used on the 7th of December? and must he be reminded, that 18 millions then advanced were given, not so much with an idea of prosecuting the war, as with an earnest hope of enabling him to forward the desirable work of peace? Can it be necessary for me to recall to him the public wishes at that period for a speedy termination of the war; and that the loan was accomplished on the general hope of a successful issue to lord Malmesbury's embassy? He told us then that the advance of 18 millions was an ample supply (for such were his words) for the exigencies of the state, and adequate to the pressure of every circumstance. Yet no disappointment has since happened to induce him so suddenly to repeat the experiment. I cannot, for my part, perceive any disappointment which can have compelled him to this unprecedented application, except the state of Ireland; and the sum required for the embarrassments of that kingdom amounts to a million and a half. What other disappointments the sanguine expectations of the right hon. gentleman may have suffered, he has not condescended to inform us. I clearly exposed the illusions with which he amused the House when he called on us to provide for the last loan of 18 millions; and the event has fully verified what I then pressed so earnestly on the attention of gentlemen. With respect to the statements made in the report of the Select Committee, of the produce of the permanent taxes for the years 1793, 1794, and 1795, I am willing to give the right hon. gentleman every benefit he may wish to derive from that report, however I may differ in opinion with the subject matter of the report, and object to the documents on which it is founded. And here, Sir, I think it necessary to declare, that the report of that committee does not merit the eulogium which has been lavished on it. I believe it has originated from, and has been conducted with good intentions;

but that it is particularly clear, that it is founded on convincing documents, and that it is supported by evident and accurate calculations, I can by no means admit. For I beg leave to ask, what has been the line of conduct pursued by the members of the committee? They sent to the public officers for the calculations in the respective departments; and on these papers, so supplied through the very channel of government, they proceeded to form a decisive opinion; and here I must notice, that in delivering their decision to the House, they have merely grounded their proceedings on the authorities furnished by government. The right hon. gentleman, instead of making his estimate, as he says it is, less by 1,100,000*l.* than that furnished by the committee, will, in fact, make it greatly exceed that which we find in the report. I wish to know on what principle he has calculated the probable decrease of the navy debt for the ensuing year. In my opinion, the most satisfactory way would be, to calculate it by the experience we have had of the expenses incurred in that department of the public service during the last year. In every estimate of this nature he has been always disappointed, and the cause is obvious: he has continually acted on erroneous principles, and has therefore been continually mistaken. What is the line of conduct, then, which he should adopt? Why, Sir, instead of confining himself to narrow and circumscribed statements, instead of implicitly regulating his judgement by the standard of official accounts and trifling calculations, he ought to take matters on a larger, and unquestionably a more secure basis, since it is established by the experience of the past. Let us take a short view of the effect of those estimates on which he prides himself. On the 7th of December 1795, the right hon. gentleman stated, that the probable increase of the navy debt would be two millions and a half; and this he called a very ample estimate. Then it rose to four millions; then to seven millions; and now, in the month of April, which seems to be a fixed term for bringing forward a second budget, he calls for eight millions more. The right hon. gentleman next tells us, that he has all his documents from the respective offices; and this I believe to be true; but he ought to suppose an increase not merely from official papers, but from the constant experience of facts. The ex-

penses of the navy are at this moment on a much larger scale than any time during the war: 110,000 men were voted for the service of last year; we have this year voted 120,000. Instead, therefore, of making the increase less than it was he should make it proportionably greater, and it ought to be 6 or 700,000*l.* more than what it is now fixed at.—With respect to the army extraordinaries, the right hon. gentleman says, they are included in the common estimate; but will he not admit that many after-payments have frequently taken place? and if so, is it not likely that such expenses will be incurred on future occasions? I feel myself justified in declaring, from the various views which I have taken of these important subjects, that notwithstanding all the heavy burthens, and all the dreadful taxes we are about to impose this day, we have still one million more to provide for the exigencies of the public services. On the subject of affording pecuniary succours to the Emperor, the right hon. gentleman expresses his desire to have a certain sum reserved for that purpose, and in that point I perfectly agree with him. Yet what is not a little extraordinary, he wishes to have 200,000*l.* voted as a loan to his imperial majesty immediately; nay, Sir, if I rightly understand him, he wishes to have the measure agreed to this very night. I hope the right hon. gentleman will set me right, if I have misconceived his intention [Mr. Pitt here signified his intention of moving the 200,000*l.* in the course of the night]. Then, Sir, I maintain such a proceeding to be a direct infringement of the declaration made by the right hon. gentleman, that he wished to have the discussion of the pecuniary succour intended for the Emperor, reserved to a convenient opportunity. I will not pretend to say how far the credit of the country may be hurt by the measure; but let me ask, is there any material difference between exporting 200,000*l.* sterling, and not receiving 200,000*l.* sterling which this country was to receive? Did the right hon. gentleman speak of this extraordinary manner of paying the interest of the loan, when he asked us to be security for the House of Austria, and when he extolled the good faith of the bank of Vienna? But having, in compliance with his arguments and entreaties, guaranteed the loan, he now with singular feeling considers it extremely hard to think that

the Emperor could pay the interest to a day—To a day, Sir! With more propriety may the right hon. gentleman say, it is hard to suppose that the Emperor can discharge it to a year, or to a far more distant time. But when will it be paid? The loan was made to him in critical circumstances: and yet he is not to pay the interest, because he is now in critical circumstances. There has not been hitherto one shilling of the interest discharged, and I fear this country will ever have cause to repent the lending of money to the Emperor. The right hon. gentleman must be aware, that if the interest remains unpaid, he must come to the House, and provide taxes for the sum guaranteed by us to his imperial majesty, and thus add, by more permanent taxes, to the burdens already too heavy to be borne.—With respect to the specious argument which is held out, that the restoration of peace will, by restoring commerce to its full extent, also make the produce of the taxes more considerable, I, on the contrary, maintain that peace is much more likely to diminish than increase the amount of our taxes. For when we look over our taxes, we find upwards of one million arising entirely from articles which could not be taxed in peace. I cannot agree that the state of our manufactures is more flourishing than it was last year, for the assertion is positively contradicted by the manufacturers themselves. When the right hon. gentleman proposed last year to lay a tax on landed and personal property, he stated the landed rent to amount to 25 millions sterling. I am, however, one of those who think he undervalued it; but taking it at his own estimate, I feel myself justified in saying, that when we have passed the taxes now proposed, and when, after the winding up of the war, we come to a state of peace, we shall have a revenue equal to our whole landed annual product. We are now, Sir, at the end of April, and eighteen millions are yet to be found. Three payments have only been made on the loyalty loan, and there are still seventenths of it to be made good, which amount to 12,600,000*l.* We are to vote eighteen millions to-day; so that between this day and the first of January next, we have to find for the public exigencies, the enormous sum of 30,600,000*l.* We have to furnish in so short a space of time as thirty-five weeks, 30,600,000*l.*, or in other words, almost one million per week, till

the end of the year. But, Sir, there is still another point of view in which I wish to place this most serious and alarming consideration. In 1796, the new taxes only produced three millions. What then, Sir, is the burden which the subject has hitherto felt? The weight of that sum alone. But the taxes to be imposed this day, with all the others, will make 7½ millions. So that we have actually felt only three millions; and, to use a favourite expression of ministers, we have been as yet only scratched by the war, for the people have not experienced half the weight of the burdens imposed upon them. I am fully sensible of the inestimable value of peace to the country, and it will, by a geometrical progression, become more valuable every year. I know no system to obtain the blessings which it secures, but an unequivocal and steady pursuit in the attainment of it. It is not, Sir, in my opinion, likely to be restored to us by sending Mr. Hammond, or any other man, in the hour of impending danger and necessity, to Vienna, but in openly declaring, and in vigorously adhering to equitable and honourable terms. But something more is requisite to be done. The House must prove themselves the representatives of the people. They must show the people that they do not blindly confide in a minister by whom they have been so often and so shamefully deceived; and if there is not patriotism enough left to force them to act thus, there is, I do not hesitate to assert, an end of the constitution. From the measures pursued, and the system avowed by ministers of persevering in them, the country is every day involved in additional perplexities and embarrassments. It is in vain we look round for an open and cheering prospect; for amid this labyrinth and confusion we strive to no purpose to rescue ourselves from distress, “While Alps on Alps arise.” With respect to the vote for the army extraordinaries, does any man think that the arrears of the army will be extinguished by that measure? No, Sir; I am of an opinion directly contrary. The exertion of the public spirit is in this momentous crisis absolutely necessary. The people ought to know, that we should have a complete change of system—a change from a blind confidence in ministers to a watchfulness and jealousy of their conduct. If the right hon. gentleman takes the sense of the House on the measure of lending

200,000*l.* to the Emperor, I shall most certainly oppose it.

Mr. *Sheridan* thought many of the taxes proposed were as frivolous and vexatious as they would prove oppressive and unproductive. They also carried with them this additional calamity, that they would not answer the views of the minister, who would soon be obliged to lay on the shoulders of the people an equal or greater load of fresh taxes. The tax on newspapers he could not but regard as a vital blow struck at the liberty of the press, in the only manner by which a minister could dare to aim it, by putting the information conveyed in them at a price beyond the reach of the majority of the public. The newspapers were denominated a luxury, but was the dismal catalogue of miseries and distress which they now contained, a luxury to those by whom they were read? The tax proposed went ultimately to the annihilation of cheap publications, for the instruction or information of the public. It was not surprising, however, that such ministers as the present should be desirous by any means to impose a check on their progress, or completely to accomplish their destruction.

The different resolutions were then put and agreed to. On that relative to newspapers a division took place, on the motion of Mr. *Sheridan*: Ayes, 151; Noes, 43. On the resolution for granting 200,000*l.* to the Emperor, Mr. *Fox* took the sense of the committee. The numbers were: Ayes, 149; Noes, 45.

Third Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons, on the Affairs of the Bank.] April 21. Mr. *Bragge* presented to the House the following Report:

THIRD REPORT of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons.*

The Committee of Secrecy, appointed to examine and state the total amount of outstanding demands on the Bank of England, and likewise of the funds for discharging the same; and to report the result thereof to the House, together with their opinion on the necessity of providing for the confirmation and continuance, for a time to be limited, of measures taken in pursuance of the Minute of Council on the 26th of February last; and who were empowered to report their proceedings from time to time to the House; and

who were instructed to inquire into the necessity of issuing the Minute of Council of the 26th of February, and to report their opinion to the House concerning such necessity, and what should appear to them to have been the causes which produced the same,

Having reported upon the two first objects of their inquiry, have, pursuant to the instruction given them by the House, proceeded to inquire into the necessity of issuing the said minute of council; and your committee find,

That the cash and bullion in the Bank having been considerably reduced between the month of June 1795 and the 21st of February 1797, were on that day in so low a state, as to induce the directors of the bank to lay before the chancellor of the exchequer the precise amount, together with their apprehensions of its being still farther reduced, in order that he might take such measures as might be thought most adviseable for the public interest.

It appears to your committee, that between that day and the 26th of February, the drain on the Bank for cash increased in a still more rapid and alarming proportion; and that supposing such drain should continue to operate (and still more so if it should increase), your committee are of opinion, that there was strong reason to apprehend that the Bank might, in the course of a few days, not only be prevented from affording the usual and necessary supply of cash for the public service, but ultimately be totally disabled from continuing its payments in cash in the ordinary course of its business; and that by a further reduction to any considerable amount, the danger to the public would have been greatly increased, and it might have become much more difficult to reinstate the affairs of the Bank, and restore the general circulation of the kingdom; that there was no reason to suppose that the drain would, on the ensuing Monday and following days be in the least diminished, but rather that it would have been considerably augmented; that no means were suggested by the directors of the bank for preventing the danger which was apprehended, nor did any such occur to them at the time, or have since been suggested to this committee; and it therefore appears to your committee that no measure could then have been taken which would have prevented such danger, other than the suspension of payments in cash required by the minute of council: your committee are therefore of opinion, that on the 26th of February there did exist a necessity for issuing the minute of council of that date, though at the time not warranted by law.

Your committee having thus reported to the House their opinion concerning such necessity, have next proceeded to inquire into the causes which might appear to them to have produced the same. These, being

* For Copies of the First and Second Reports, see p. 25, and 26.

undefined in their nature and extent, and not easily admitting of any limitation, have led your committee into investigations, the detail of which, subject to some restrictions hereafter explained, will be found in the subsequent part of this report, and the Appendix thereunto annexed.

In order, however, to comply, as far as they are able, with the instructions which they have received, your committee have, in the first place, directed their attention to such causes as appeared to them most capable of being ascertained, from their immediate and sensible effect upon the state of cash in the Bank.

They find it agreed, that whatever were the causes which operated to reduce the cash and bullion in the Bank to the state in which they stood at the beginning of February last, the operation of those causes, being from their nature as well as actual effect gradual and progressive, might perhaps have ceased or been counteracted. But your committee find, that subsequent to the period last adverted to, a new cause of drain on the Bank suddenly came into action with sufficient violence to produce the necessity in question, even under the operation of any measures which could from that time have been applied to prevent it.

The alarm of invasion which, when an immediate attack was first apprehended in Ireland, had occasioned some extraordinary demand for cash on the Bank of England in the months of December and January last, began in February to produce similar effects in the North of England. Your committee find, that in consequence of this apprehension the farmers suddenly brought the produce of their lands to sale, and carried the notes of the country banks, which they had collected by these and other means, into those banks, for payment; that this unusual and sudden demand for cash reduced the several banks at Newcastle to the necessity of suspending their payments in specie, and of availing themselves of all the means in their power of procuring a speedy supply of cash from the metropolis; that the effects of this demand on the Newcastle banks, and of their suspension of payments in cash, soon spread over various parts of the country, from whence similar applications were consequently made to the metropolis for cash; that the alarm, thus diffused, not only occasioned an increased demand for cash in the country, but probably a disposition in many to hoard what was thus obtained; that this call on the metropolis, through whatever channels, directly affected the Bank of England, as the great repository of cash, and was in the course of still farther operation upon it, when stopped by the minute of council of the 26th of February.

Your committee further observe, that, as the directors of the Bank had, previous to the actual existence of the alarm, lessened the amount of their discounts, so as to have

reduced them, by the 25th of February, one-fourth of the sum at which they stood at the beginning of the present year, and as the restriction of the accommodation afforded by them to individuals produced a similar decrease in the amount of discounts by private bankers, the joint effect of this diminished accommodation to the public, at a time when the circumstances above-mentioned, and others to be hereafter adverted to, seemed to require an increase of it, must necessarily have been an additional embarrassment in commercial and pecuniary transactions, tending to increase the demand for the cash on the Bank.

Your committee are therefore of opinion, that the immediately efficient cause, operating upon the affairs of the Bank, at the period and in the manner above stated, which produced the necessity of the minute of council of the 26th of February, was the alarm existing under all the circumstances before referred to.

In investigating the more remote causes which might have operated to reduce the cash and bullion in the Bank to the state in which they stood at the beginning of the period above referred to, and which might have contributed to increase the effect of the alarm which then took place, your committee have collected a great variety of statements and opinions, and have submitted to the House, in this Report and Appendix, the whole evidence adduced before them, with the exception only of such statements, connected with the internal management of the Bank, or the private concerns of individuals, as could not, in the opinion of the committee, with propriety and safety be made public.

Your committee have thought proper to make the general dealings of this country with other countries an object of their inquiry, in order to ascertain their probable effect upon the augmentation or diminution of bullion and specie in the kingdom. They have for this purpose taken a view of the exports and imports of the country, and adverted to the general course of exchange with foreign countries; they have examined the inspector general of imports and exports, from whom they have obtained a statement, from whence it may be collected, that the balance of trade in favour of this country has, during the war, very greatly increased, so as in each of the years 1793, 1794, 1795, and 1796, to have amounted upon an average to about 6,500,000*l.*, creating a balance on the whole of about twenty-six millions, notwithstanding the diminution of the general balance by the sums paid for the great importation of corn, occasioned by the extraordinary scarcity which lately prevailed, and encouraged by large bounties, to an extent much beyond the ordinary scale of commerce in that article.

From a review of the course of exchange,

particularly with *Hamburgh*, which the events of the war have rendered a principal object of attention, it appears, that in the month of May 1795, the course of exchange with *Hamburgh* was reduced to such a rate as, in the opinion of persons most conversant with the subject, rendered the export of bullion from this country a profitable traffic.

That it so continued till March 1796, when it rose above the rate at which such export could be profitable, and towards the end of February last rose so high as to be favourable to the import of bullion, and has since, in a greater or less degree, so continued.

Your committee have next adverted to the situation of the country at the commencement of the war, in order more correctly to estimate the effects of the war on the general state of cash and bullion within the kingdom.

It appears that the embarrassments which arose early in the year 1793 are to be attributed to temporary causes, which are detailed in the report of the Select Committee appointed in that year, particularly the want of a circulating medium, produced by the discredit of a great quantity of country bank notes; and that from the circumstance of the distress being relieved by the loan of exchequer bills, all of which were duly re-paid, there was not a deficiency of cash at that time in the kingdom.

It further appears, that although in the beginning of the year 1793 the cash and bullion in the bank were reduced very much below their ordinary amount, yet the quantity of foreign gold, purchased by the Bank in the year 1793, very greatly exceeded the quantities purchased in the three preceding years; and the quantity of English coin purchased by the Bank in the same year was also considerable; so that, long before the close of the year, the quantity of their cash and bullion was raised to an amount much above what has been deemed necessary for their ordinary purposes, and above the amount at which it had been during any part of the year 1792.

It also appears, that although extraordinary quantities of bullion were exported in the years 1792 and 1793, yet the cash and bullion in the Bank increased early in the year 1794, and during the whole of that year exceeded the amount of their cash and bullion during any part of the year 1792.

Your committee have next proceeded to inquire what causes, since the close of the year 1792, may have contributed to draw cash and bullion out of the country, or prevent the influx of them into it. The first that have occurred to the committee are the expenses incident to the war, and other expenses abroad, which are set forth in the Appendix to this Report, as far as the same could be made out, from whence it appears, that the amount of those expenditures is about 32,810,977*l.*, of which sum about 15,700,000*l.* appears to have been expended in Europe,

and the remainder in other parts of the world.

For the purpose of discovering how far these several articles of expenditure and advance have collectively contributed to draw bullion from the country by actual exportation, your committee have procured an account of bullion exported, exclusive of Ireland, in the years 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793, 1794, 1795, and 1796, which is set forth in the appendix. This account is probably correct with respect to the quantity of bullion and of foreign coin exported; but as the current coin of the kingdom cannot lawfully be exported, probably clandestine exportation may have taken place; and persons going out of the kingdom may also have taken with them both foreign coin and current coin to a considerable amount, to answer their immediate expenses. One cause of exportation of the coin of the kingdom has possibly been the superior price for which gold, during some periods of the war, has been sold at *Hamburgh* and elsewhere, which made the exportation of the current gold coin melted into bars, or in its state of coinage, a profitable commerce.

Your committee have obtained accurate information of the remittances made for loans and advances to the Emperor, the particulars of which are stated in the Appendix; and your committee find that part of the loan of 4,600,000*l.*, negotiated in 1794 and 1795, was remitted in bullion, part of it in gold to the amount of about 150,000*l.*, consisting principally of *Louis d'ors*, and the remainder, about 1,043,000*l.*, in silver, chiefly Spanish dollars. It appears that the greatest part of this bullion was purchased of the Bank; and that the whole was purchased through the intervention of the confidential broker of the Bank, and was sent to Germany at different times, between the 9th of September 1794 and the 11th of February 1796; that the rest of that loan was remitted in bills of exchange; and that the advances made by government to the Emperor, and other foreign princes, in 1796 and 1797, were entirely remitted by bills of exchange, no part having been remitted in cash or bullion.

It also appears that the subsidies to the king of Prussia were remitted, in 1794, partly in silver bullion from this country, partly by gold bullion procured in *Amsterdam*, partly by drafts on *Amsterdam*, and partly by drafts drawn on London from *Hamburgh*, and by the maritime society at Berlin.

It further appears to your committee, that the quantity of gold coined at the Mint during the years 1793, 1794, 1795, and 1796, amount to upwards of six millions sterling, of which about 885,000*l.* only was coined in the two last years.

In addition to these causes of actual expense, your committee think proper to advert to various circumstances which may contribute either to the delay of the due return of commercial dealings, or require enlarged

means of circulation in the country. Of this nature are, the habit of the British merchant to give longer credit to the foreign merchant than he receives in return; the change of the course of trade since the war, and the opening of new accounts with new customers; the circuitous remittance of money from various parts, in consequence of interruptions in the means of direct communication, and the state of some of the countries from which considerable remittances are due. To these are to be added the increase of domestic commerce, the increase of manufactures for home consumption, the general spirit of internal improvement in agriculture, and in the formation of canals and other public works. To these may also be added, as producing a further necessity for a greater quantity of circulating medium, other causes of a different nature, and in other respects of an opposite tendency, and particularly the increased price of freight, shipping, insurance, demurrage, and a variety of other articles, generally affecting the trade of the country both in its former and in its increased state; the advanced price of labour, and of all the necessities of life, and almost every kind of commodity. Added to all these circumstances, the operations and expenses of the war may be supposed to require a greater quantity of circulating medium for internal as well as for external purposes. Some of these considerations appear to have produced the resolutions of a meeting of merchants in London of the 24th of March 1797, subjoined to this report. But while these considerations seemed to require increased means of circulation, other circumstances have occurred to diminish the facility of it.

The increased amount and low price of the public funds, and the high discount on the negotiation of government securities, have been particularly stated to your committee as having considerable operation in this point of view, by inducing many persons, who before the war had been in the habit of employing their money in discounting bills of exchange as a profitable dealing, to withdraw their money from that course of business, and employ it in the purchase of floating government securities, or other public funds. It also appears to your committee that these circumstances have had the further effect of increasing the difficulty of raising money by loan upon private securities. The general effect of the low price of the public funds, and the great profit to be made by purchasing floating government securities, seems to have been to invest in various government securities large sums of money before employed as part of the active capital of the country, either immediately by the owner, or mediately through the operations of discount on loan. The arrears owing by government to individuals for public services of various kinds have also been stated to your committee as tending to diminish the means of circulation,

particularly as they may raise distrust and create difficulties to commercial men dealing with government by uncertainty of payment, which may also have been increased by a want of punctuality in some late instances, alleged in evidence before this committee, in discharging bills of exchange drawn upon the navy and victualling boards.

The advances made by the Bank to government have also been stated, and particularly by the governor and directors of the Bank, as having materially contributed to their present embarrassment; and it has been suggested, that it was important considerably to diminish those advances for the purpose of reducing their notes in circulation to a nearer proportion to their cash, or at least to bring the amount of them more under their control, while at the same time they might be enabled to afford a larger accommodation to the commerce of the country by way of discount.

It appears, on the other hand, to have been the opinion of persons engaged in commercial and pecuniary transactions, that the diminution of bank notes since December 1795, so far from tending to secure the Bank from the danger of a drain of cash, by contracting their engagements within a narrow compass, has in effect contributed to the embarrassment which they have lately experienced, by reducing the requisite means of circulation, diminishing the general accommodation by way of discount, and thus occasioning a more pressing demand for specie, for which the Bank itself is the readiest as well as the ultimate source of supply.

There appears to your committee good reason to apprehend that the country bank notes in circulation have been reduced one third from the time of the difficulties in 1793 to December 1796, and that they have since that period suffered a still further diminution; and from hence has been inferred the necessity of providing from the Bank an adequate supply of their notes to compensate for this chasm in the circulation of the country.

Your committee conceive it may be thought important to state, that the amount of the cash and bullion in the Bank, during a great part of the year 1782, and a very considerable part of the year 1784, was below the amount at which it stood in any part of the year 1796; and that, during the whole of 1783, the amount was lower, and during some parts of that year was considerably lower than it was on the 26th of February last; and that the Bank did not at those periods lessen the amount of their discounts or notes, and the circulation of the country suffered no interruption. It also appears that the debt of government to the Bank for advances in the years 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783, and 1784, was generally very considerable, and bearing a near proportion to the debt due for advances on the 26th of February last, as appears by the accounts set forth in the Appendix, part of the sum included in the account of the

present debt being the amount of unclaimed dividends paid by the Bank for the public service.

Your committee also have observed, that during a period of about nine months, between the month of June 1792 and the month of March 1793, there was a drain of cash and bullion from the Bank to an amount larger than that of the drain which took place from the month of December 1795 to the 26th of February 1797, being a period of about fourteen months, and considerably larger than the drain during the twelve months from the first of January 1796 to the first of January 1797; and that in April 1793, the Bank raised their discounts to more than double the amount at which their discounts stood in December 1796; and that the cash and bullion gradually rose from the month of April 1793; and in the month of September 1793, the amount was nearly equal to the amount in June 1792, and in December 1793 exceeded the amount during any part of the year 1792, and in the year 1794 rose still higher.

Your committee having stated these facts, and these opinions, submit the conclusion to be drawn from them, and the consideration of the whole, to the wisdom of the House.

Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, on the Affairs of the Bank.] April 28. The lord president presented the following

REPORT.

The Secret Committee appointed by the Lords' Committees to inquire into the Causes which produced the Order of Council of the 26th of February, 1797,

Having examined many witnesses, and called for several papers and accounts, have agreed to report the minutes of their proceedings, together with such papers and accounts, as will be found in the Report. The lords of the committee will conclude their Report with a summary of the principal points which relate to the said causes, as resulting from the evidence and the accounts. [Here follow the examinations of the witnesses, and the evidence of each distinctly; and after that a variety of papers and accounts from the Bank, Custom-House, East-India-House, Mint, Transport-Office, &c. &c.] The Report concludes with the following summary:

The lords of the committee think proper to conclude their Report, with a summary of the chief points which have occurred in their inquiry respecting the causes, that produced the order of council of the 26th of February last, as resulting from the evidence taken by them, and from the accounts laid before them.

In order to render the subsequent details relative to this important subject more intelligible, the committee think it right to begin with taking a general view of the state of the circulation of the kingdom.

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It appears by the evidence, that the circulation of this kingdom, by which its immense commerce is carried on, consists principally, in the metropolis and its neighbourhood, either of the notes of the Bank of England, or of coin chiefly made of gold. In the country (where the notes of the Bank of England did not circulate to any great amount) it consists of the bills of country bankers, or of the banking companies in Scotland, payable to bearer on demand; and of coin of the description before mentioned.

Inland bills of exchange are thought by many to be a part of the circulation of the kingdom. They are not strictly so in the same sense as the two sorts of paper before mentioned. They are rather transfers of debts from the drawers to the persons on whom the bills are drawn. They are generally made payable at distant periods; and as they are not payable at all times on demand, they cannot, like the former, answer all the purposes of cash.

In the metropolis the quantity of paper much exceeds the quantity of coin in circulation. The committee have no sufficient means before them to judge of the proportion of cash and paper in the metropolis, except as far as any inference can be drawn from the quantity of cash paid at the Bank compared with the amount of the notes issued by that corporate body, as stated in the evidence of Mr. Newland, principal cashier of the Bank; and particularly from the proportion of cash paid quarterly at the Bank, in discharge of the dividends of the public stocks, a part of which only is received by bankers, the remainder by persons of every description.

But in the country, and particularly in those parts of it where no considerable manufactures are established, and no great commercial enterprise is carried on, there is reason to conclude that the quantity of paper exceeds in a less proportion the coin in circulation than in the metropolis. It must vary according to circumstances of time or place; and the committee have no information which enables them to form a judgment on this subject. It can hardly, however, be doubted, that there is too little of British coin, particularly of silver, current in the kingdom, from a cause which will be hereafter stated.

The Bank of England is at the head of all circulation. It is the great repository of the spare cash of the nation, and alone carries bullion to the Mint to be coined. It is subject, on that account, to be called on for cash, directly or indirectly, by those who are in want of it, and is necessarily sensible of every material failure or distress, which arises from any deficiency or want of coin, in every part of this kingdom or Ireland.

It appears that the circulation of paper was carried to its greatest height a short time previous to the beginning of the year 1793.

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But early in that year a great diminution took place in the circulation of country bank bills, from the sudden failure of many of the country banks. Mr. Ellison states, that previous to this period there were about 280 country banks in England and Wales, and that he does not believe they exceed at present 230; the business of which has by no means increased in proportion to the reduction of the number; and that the issue of country bank bills has considerably diminished; that the quantity of specie actually kept by the present country bankers is, at this time, larger than it was before the year 1793, and that they have lessened their balances with the London bankers.

Mr. Thornton's evidence confirms the account given by Mr. Ellison of the failure of the country banks in 1793, and of the consequent diminution of the circulation of country bank notes at that time. Subsequent to this event these country bank bills increased again in some degree, but never to their former extent. Both Mr. Thornton and Mr. Ellison are of opinion, that considerable quantities of cash must have been drawn from the metropolis into the country, in order to supply the deficiency of these country bank bills.

In the beginning of the year 1793, when, from the causes before mentioned, the circulation of this kingdom began to be so much diminished, the present war commenced. A state of war always requires a more ample circulation even within the kingdom. The public loans, which in all wars are necessary, and in the present war have been particularly great, employ a considerable portion of the circulating capital. The present increased value of money, which is sufficiently proved by the high rate of interest, clearly shows what must be the demand for it, and consequently the scarcity of it. But during the present war, it is worthy of remark, that expensive enterprises of a private nature have not diminished, as in all former wars, but even augmented. It appears by an account inserted in this report, that the number of bills of inclosure which passed in the four years preceding the present war was 138, and that the number which had passed during the four years of the war was 283. The number of bills for navigations and canals which passed in the four years preceding the present war was 30, and that the number which have passed during the four years of the war was 69. And further, that the sum authorized to be borrowed for the making those canals and navigations was, in the first four years, 2,377,200*l.*; and in the last period of four years 7,415,100*l.*

But the demand of money for public expenses abroad, more particularly applies to the present subject: the loan made to the Emperor in the year 1795 of 4,600,000; the subsidies paid to foreign princes; the money remitted for the pay of British troops, or

foreign troops in British pay, while this kingdom had an army on the continent; and the advances made to the court of Vienna; together with the money sent to the West-Indies and the Cape of Good Hope, for the pay of British troops there; if they did not altogether draw British coin out of the country in any great amount, must at least have prevented that influx of coin or bullion which, in consequence of a favourable balance of commerce, would have otherwise supplied the circulation of the kingdom. Mr. Boyd, however, in his evidence, states, that in remitting the imperial loan, as well as the advances to the Emperor, he never sent any British coin out of the kingdom (which could not, indeed, legally be done): and that in remitting the said loan, he sent in foreign coin, or bullion, to the amount only of about 1,200,000*l.* That the remainder of the loan, and the whole of the advances, were remitted in bills of exchange. It is obvious, however, that the drains occasioned by expenditure abroad for purposes before mentioned (large as the amount of them may have been), are nothing more than what has happened in all former wars, in which the government of Great Britain has found it essential for its interests to maintain armies on the European continent, or at any great distance from the kingdom.

It appears by an account inserted in this report, that all the remittances made for the services of the war in the West-Indies on the continent of Europe, in the island of Corsica, and other distant parts of the world, amounted, during the four last years, to 33,510,779*l.* 0*s.* 7½*d.*

It appears in another account inserted in this report, which has distinguished the sums expended on the European continent from what were expended in other distant parts of the world, that the total of the money expended on the continent of Europe during the said four years, including the imperial loan and the Advances made to the Emperor, amounted to 14,988,422*l.* 9*s.* 8½*d.*

It appears, lastly, by a third account inserted in this report, that the sums paid for all sorts of military services on the continent during the war ending in 1763, amounted to 20,626,997*l.* 0*s.* 7*d.*

To the sums sent, during the present war, to the European continent, to the West-Indies, and the Cape of Good Hope, for military purposes, should be added the sums drawn for by the commanders of our fleets on foreign service in every part of the world.

It appears, on the other hand, by the accounts of the value of the imports and exports for the last twenty years, produced by Mr. Irving, inspector general of imports and exports, that the demand for cash to be sent abroad, for the purposes before mentioned, was greatly compensated by a very large balance of commerce in favour of this kingdom, greater than was ever known in any

preceding period. The value of the exports of the last year amounted, according to the valuation on which the accounts of the inspector general are founded, to 30,424,184*l.*; which is more than double what it was in any year of the American war, and one-third more than it was on an average during the last peace, previous to the year 1792; and though the value of the imports to this country has, during the same period, greatly increased, the excess of the value of the exports above that of the imports, which constitutes the balance of trade, has augmented even in a greater proportion.

It is particularly observable, that the exports to Germany alone, for the two last years, have amounted to more than 8,000,000*l.* annually; when, in time of peace, they did not usually amount to more than 1,900,000*l.* And those exports to Germany exceed in amount by at least 2,600,000*l.*, the whole that was annually exported in time of peace to France, Flanders, Holland, and Germany.

The House will see in the evidence of Mr. Irving much information, for the purpose of showing that all our principal articles of export, particularly those which consist of British manufactures, are greatly underrated in their value, as well as many capital articles of import. Coffee is the only material article which appears to be overrated in the books of the inspector general; it is more overrated on exportation than on importation. The valuation, upon which the accounts of the inspector general are founded, was settled in the year 1696, or 1697, when the prices of all these articles were greatly inferior to what they are at present, and before our manufactures had received the improvements which have been made in them of late years, so that the real value of both our imports and exports, particularly the latter, is certainly considerably higher than is stated in his accounts. The House will also see many excellent observations, in the evidence of this gentleman, for the purpose of correcting the manner of taking the true balance of our trade. He observes, that in forming this balance, many articles of import are stated as unfavourable to this country, when they are, in fact, accessions of wealth, such as the produce of our various fisheries, and a considerable part of the imports from our possessions in the East and West Indies. The whole of the produce of these fisheries is certainly an accession of national wealth. So much therefore as is imported directly into this country, must be considered as an increase of stock to it. The value of such parts as are sent directly from the fishing places to foreign countries, and sold there, is either remitted in bills of exchange, which is wealth, or it is laid out in the purchase of commodities to be imported into this country, which is an increase of stock. This produce is procured, not by any wealth sent from this country, but by the adventurous enterprize of our fishermen; and

the value of such produce, when it is sent directly from the fishing places to foreign countries, cannot appear in any custom-house account. In like manner, a considerable part of the imports from the East and West-Indies, ought not to be stated in the balance of our commerce as unfavourable to this country, particularly such parts of the investments in the East-Indies as are purchased by the revenues of the British settlements there; as well as those parts which are imported either from the East or West-Indies, for the purpose of remitting private fortunes acquired there, or as the income of persons who, having estates or mortgages in the West-Indies, reside and spend their incomes in Great-Britain. The value of such part of these imports as is re-exported, will appear on the export side of the account, and serves to balance the value of the same articles as stated on the import side; and the whole of the mercantile profit which they leave behind, is in itself a considerable accession of wealth to this kingdom that cannot appear in the custom-house accounts.

Mr. Irving has delivered it as his opinion, that the true balance of our trade amounted, on a medium of the four years preceding January 1796, to upwards of 6,500,000*l.* per annum, exclusive of the profits arising from our East and West-India trade, which he estimates at upwards of 4,000,000*l.* per ann.; and exclusive of the profits derived from our fisheries.

But whatever uncertainty may still remain in forming an estimate of the true balance of our commerce in any particular year, the accounts of the inspector general of imports and exports, serve at least to afford a good comparative state of the amount of our commerce in different years; for it is fair to presume that the defects are not greater in the accounts of one year than in another.

Great, however, as this balance of commerce may appear, it would have been still greater in a very considerable degree, but from the unusual scarcity of grain, which made it necessary both for government and individuals to import large quantities of grain for the relief of the inhabitants of this kingdom. In an account delivered by Mr. Claude Scott, an eminent corn factor, it appears, that for the three years preceding the 5th of January 1797, there were paid to foreign countries for grain imported into this kingdom, the following sums, viz.

In 1794	£. 1,983,856
In 1795	1,535,672
In 1796	3,926,484
	7,446,012

Add, imported in 1793, as estimated by Mr. Scott in his evidence before the committee .. 1,500,000

Total £. 8,946,012

This balance of commerce was also rendered less favourable by the great sums paid for naval stores during the war beyond what are usually paid in time of peace. It appears by an account presented by the commissioners of his majesty's navy, that the value of naval stores imported on account of his majesty's navy in the four years previous to 1797, amounted to £.7,825,876

And in the four years preceding 1793, amounted only to 2,500,139 Excess. £.5,325,737

And it appears by an account presented of the amount of bills drawn on the commissioners for victualling, from foreign parts, in the four years ending the 5th of Jan. 1797, that they amounted to £.1,368,921

And in the four years ending the 5th of January 1793, to 134,629

Total excess £.6,560,029

Though it cannot be doubted that the balance of our trade, even with these deductions, must have brought great wealth in various articles of commerce into this kingdom, and that unusual quantities of foreign merchandise must, in consequence thereof, have been deposited in it; yet it may be doubted whether it brought so great a quantity of the precious metals, to be converted into coin, as in former periods; for it appears in the evidence of sir John Hort, who was his majesty's consul general in Portugal for twenty-nine years, and of Mr. Whitmore, an eminent Portugal merchant, that the importation of gold and silver bullion, from Lisbon into this kingdom, has been less than it was formerly; and that the exchange between Lisbon and London, which used formerly to be greatly in favour of London, has of late, from a variety of circumstances, been sometimes in favour of, and sometimes against this country, and for the last three years more against this country than in its favour, from causes which are fully explained in the evidence of those gentlemen. Mr. Whitmore adds, that the quantity of silver which has of late been imported has greatly exceeded the quantity of gold. But as the Mint price of silver bullion has been, during nearly the whole of the present century, considerably less than the market price of this precious metal, the silver bullion so imported could not be converted into coin, but after having left a quantity sufficient for the use of our manufactures, must have again been exported, and did not contribute in the smallest degree to augment the coin in this kingdom.

The accounts presented by the officers of the Mint of the quantity of bullion coined in the last four years, show that the quantity

coined at the Mint in 1795 amounted only to 493,416*l.*, and in 1796 to 464,680*l.*, which is not more than a sixth of what was brought to the Mint to be coined in the two preceding years, and greatly inferior to what had been coined upon an average, of the former years of his majesty's reign.

By an account presented by Mr. Irving of the quantity of bullion exported from this country from the year 1790 to 1796, both inclusive, it appears that the quantity of gold bullion exported, on an average, in the last four years, being years of war, is not a third of what was annually exported on an average in the preceding years of peace; and that the quantity of silver bullion exported in the four last years, being years of war, is also not a third of what was annually exported, on an average, in the three preceding years of peace; and this account receives a certain degree of confirmation from the accounts delivered in by the East-India company of the amount of Spanish dollars exported by the company, or permitted by the company to be exported by private persons, which prove that in the last three years the amount of Spanish dollars exported has been less than usual.

The committee wish to throw further light on the subject, by obtaining an account of the amount of gold and silver coin or bullion imported into this kingdom in the before-mentioned periods; but they find, that by a law passed in the 15th year of the reign of his late majesty Charles 2nd, ch. 7, sec. 12, coin and bullion are exempted from entry at the Custom-house on importation into this kingdom; so that the officers of the customs could not produce an account of any such importation.

There are, however, other circumstances in evidence before the committee which may have contributed to render less perceptible, hitherto at least, the advantages arising from the influx of wealth into this kingdom, in consequence of a favourable balance of trade.

It was observed by Henry Thornton, esq. (and it is indeed self-evident), that in proportion as the commerce of this country increases, a greater capital is necessary for carrying it on; and also, that any given quantity of commerce, in time of war, by the increased expenses of freight, insurance, and mercantile charges, requires a greater capital than the same quantity of commerce in time of peace. These two circumstances must have had considerable influence, in the course of the last three years, upon the circulating cash and paper of the kingdom, especially when it is considered that, from causes already assigned, the circulation of paper was considerably diminished; and Mr. Bosanquet, a bank director, in assigning the causes of the great pressure on the Bank, for want of cash, in the year 1783, is of opinion, that the drain of cash at that time proceeded from the great extension of commerce which followed the peace, and which occasioned so large an ex-

port of the commodities of this country, that the circulation was hardly sufficient to support it.

It appears lastly, by the evidence of the bank directors, that in consequence of the long credit given by our merchants, the payments for the great quantities of our manufactures, produce, and other merchandise, exported do not take place till a considerable time after their exportation, though a great additional capital has been previously employed in providing the articles so exported. The balance of payments, which arises out of the balance of trade, is necessarily posterior to it; and in countries like Great Britain, where long credits are given, it may not produce its full effect upon our circulation for a considerable time.

The result of all the various circumstances before stated, does not appear on the whole, to have produced any permanent disadvantageous effect on the cash of the Bank till the month of September, 1795: the cash of the Bank had, indeed been much lower than usual in March and June 1793; but it rose in the September of that year nearly to its usual average. From September 1795, however, it continued progressively declining, so as to be, during the whole of the year 1796, considerably less than in the year 1795, but not lower at the end of 1796 than in the middle of that year; and in the commencement of the present year, still less than in the year 1796; and in the week preceding the issuing of the order of council, it diminished rapidly: it was not, however, even at that period, in any degree so low as in the year 1783, and particularly in the month of October of that year.

The conferences between the chancellor of the exchequer and the governor and deputy governor of the Bank, on the apprehensions they entertained of the diminution of their cash, and the representations made by them, from time to time, on the effect which foreign loans and remittances had on the state of their cash, will appear by the evidence of the said governor and deputy governor, and other directors of the Bank, when they attended the committee, either as a deputation or in their individual capacity, as well as from the minutes of those conferences and the copies of the resolutions delivered by them to the chancellor of the exchequer: it will appear also from the evidence of the chancellor of the exchequer, and from the letters written by him to the governor of the Bank; all which are inserted in this report, and to which the committee think it more proper to refer the House than to give a summary of them.

The accounts before inserted, and the evidence just referred to, will also show what was the nature of the advances made by the Bank to government—upon what funds or credit they were made—what was their amount at different periods—how far the amount of those advances, during the present

war, have exceeded those usually made in time of peace—how far they have exceeded those made in the last war—and whether they were greater or less, immediately previous to the issuing the order in council of the 26th of February, than at any preceding period.

The committee were desirous of throwing further light on this subject, by laying before the House some accurate account of the exchanges between Great Britain and other countries; as these, when they can be correctly ascertained, afford a good criterion of the balance of payments between Great Britain and other countries, and thereby show, whether there is reason to conclude that any coin or bullion have been exported or imported. At present, the only places with which there subsists any regular course of exchange with Great Britain, are Lisbon and Hamburgh. At this last place a great proportion of the accounts between Great Britain and the northern parts of Europe is now settled and paid. The par of exchange with Lisbon can be accurately stated; it is 67½. It has already been shown, from the evidence of sir John Hort and Mr. Whitmore, how far the exchange between London and Lisbon has been of late to the disadvantage of this country; and their account of it is fully confirmed by a statement of the course of exchange, taken from Castaing's papers, inserted in this Report.

With respect to the exchange between Great Britain and Hamburgh, the committee have not been able to decide, to their satisfaction, what is the actual par of exchange between London and Hamburgh. The witnesses they have examined have widely differed with respect to the par of exchange between those places. The committee, however, have inserted in the minutes of the evidence the answers of Mr. Boyd to two questions put to him, and a paper presented to this committee by one of the members of it, which throw considerable light on this intricate subject, and will account, in some degree, for the difficulty the committee had experienced in determining, with sufficient accuracy, the par of this exchange.

The mercantile accounts in Hamburgh and London have a reference to different metals. Silver appears to be the common coin of Hamburgh, and gold is, in that place, rather to be considered as a commodity. Gold is the mercantile coin of Great Britain, and silver has been for many years only a commodity, which has no fixed price, and is very rarely carried to the Mint to be coined, but varies according to the demand for it at the market. The market-price of these precious metals appears also to have an influence on the banco money of Hamburgh, in which the exchanges are reckoned. It is probable that to these circumstances is to be imputed the difficulty of determining the par of exchange between London and Hamburgh. On the

present subject, therefore, all that the committee can say with certainty is, that according to the evidence of the governor of the Bank of England (which is confirmed by a paper annexed), the exchange with Hamburgh ceased to be unfavourable to this country in March 1796, became more favourable in the month of October last; and that it continued favourable till the 26th of February, when the order of council was issued; and that it continues so still.

The committee have hitherto stated the several points relating to the more remote causes, by which the circulation of the kingdom, and the general state of the Bank, may have been affected. They proceed now to those which immediately preceded the 26th February last, and more directly contributed to the necessity of the order of council, which was issued on that day.

It appears from the evidence of Mr. Ellison, that a few weeks previous to the 26th of February, two great mercantile banks at Newcastle stopped payment in cash, owing to the effect of a local alarm, similar, as stated by this gentleman, to that in 1793, which occasioned most of the country bankers to draw large sums of money from the metropolis, and induced them to keep in store larger quantities of specie than before the year 1793, in order to make their payments, if such should be required of them. Mr. Thornton confirms in general this account given by Mr. Ellison. He agrees also with Mr. Ellison with respect to the demand for cash made on the metropolis by the country bankers, for the purpose of being sent to different parts of the kingdom, where it is partly kept by the country bankers for the uses before mentioned, and partly drawn out of their hands by individuals to be hoarded.

It appears, by the evidence of Mr. Thornton, that there was, at this time, also a demand of cash to be sent from the metropolis to Scotland.

But those demands for cash from the distant parts of the kingdom, were not the only causes of the embarrassments of the Bank of England at this period. It is stated in an account delivered by Mr. Puget, one of the directors of the Bank of England, and agent for the Bank of Ireland, that in the commencement of the year 1797 there was an unusual demand of cash made on the Bank of England to be sent to Ireland; and that there was an expectation of a loan being intended to be raised in Great Britain for the service of Ireland, which would have necessarily occasioned the exportation of a considerable quantity of coin from the metropolis to the latter kingdom. It is proper to add, that the kingdom of Ireland appears, for some weeks previous to the issuing of the order of council of the 26th of February, to have experienced a great want of cash, similar to that which was experienced in Great Britain.

There is a circumstance that throws consi-

derable light on one, at least, of the causes which produced this great demand for cash on the Bank. It appears by the account of the state of the cash at the Bank, at different periods, as laid before the committee, that the greatest drain of cash which the Bank has experienced, subsequent to the year 1783, was in March and June, 1793, that is, a short time after the failure of the country banks in that year; and in the commencement of the month of February of this year, that is, a short time after the Newcastle banks stopped payment in cash, and when the alarms before stated produced great demands for cash from different parts of the country; so that, in both these periods, the same cause appears to have produced an effect nearly similar, that is, a very unusual drain of cash from the Bank.

The increased demand for cash must bear a proportion to the decrease of any other sort of circulation that is a substitute for it. The committee will presently show to what degree the circulation of the notes of the Bank of England had been diminished, immediately previous to the 26th of February last. With respect to the decrease of country bank bills in circulation, Mr. Thornton, who appears to have collected his evidence from several parts of the kingdom with great accuracy, was desired by the committee to deliver in an account of the proportion in which, according to his information, country bank bills circulated in different parts of the kingdom, before the failures in 1793; at a period subsequent to that year; and at the present time. This account may be seen at large in the evidence; but the result is, that at the present time the circulation of these bills is in one part of the kingdom not more than about a third; in another, not more than half; and in a third, but a sixth, of what was in circulation before the year 1793: and the committee have already endeavoured to show, in a former part of this summary, to what degree the means of coining, and, in consequence thereof, the regular supply of new coin (which alone could fill up the void occasioned by this decrease of circulating paper) had diminished of late years.

From the evidence of the governor of the Bank, and from the report of the last secret committee, which has been laid before this committee, it appears, that it was not singly the diminished state of their cash which gave the directors any great alarm; the governor and Mr. Bosanquet rather impute this alarm to the progressively increasing demands for cash upon them, particularly in the week preceding the 26th of February, and to the reasons they had to apprehend that these demands, and the consequent progressive reduction of cash, would continue and even increase; and they add, that this drain was in great part owing to demands for cash from the country, such demands being made upon the Bank indirectly from the country, but

directly from the bankers of London, who were to supply the country.

The directors of the Bank, under the impression which these alarms and embarrassments had occasioned, appear to have judged it prudent to diminish their notes in circulation, and the consequent demands that might come upon them, so as to make the demands more nearly correspond with the state of their cash. It will be seen in the accounts presented to the committee, of the amount of bank notes in circulation at different periods, that the average amount of bank notes in circulation at different periods, that the average amount of these notes in circulation for several years previous to the end of the year 1796, may be stated at between 10,000,000*l.* and 11,000,000*l.*, hardly ever falling below 9,000,000*l.*, and not often exceeding to any great amount 11,000,000*l.* It will appear by one of the afore-mentioned accounts, that in the latter end of the year 1796, and in the beginning of 1797, the amount of the bank notes in circulation was less than the average before stated; and on the 25th of February last, it was reduced to 8,640,250*l.*

It is true, that in an account presented to the committee of the amount of bank notes in circulation in the years 1782, 1783, and 1784, the quantity was then generally even less than the sum last mentioned; but at that time the foreign commerce of the kingdom was not even one half of what it is at present, as will be seen in the account of imports and exports inserted in this Report.

It is not probable that the reduction of bank notes to 8,640,250*l.*, immediately previous to the issuing the order in council of the 26th February, was owing to any diminution of the demands for them; for at that time the merchants of London were subject to difficulties from not being able to get their bills discounted.

The directors of the Bank had, on the 31st December 1795, come to a resolution to diminish their discounts; but notwithstanding that resolution, they did not diminish the amount of their discounts in the course of the year 1796, compared with what they were in 1795, but had rather increased them, not however to such an extent as to make them correspond with the wants of the commercial world. A considerable degree of distress consequently ensued, which distress may also be imputed to another cause in evidence before the committee. By law no man is to take more than 5*l.* per cent interest for money lent or advanced by him; and this restriction is understood to apply to bankers in the business of discounting; so that in time of war, when a much greater interest than 5*l.* per cent can be made of money upon government securities, the discounts which merchants obtain from bankers and other individuals, are necessarily much diminished, and they are forced, on that account, to resort directly to the Bank.

Some of the persons whom the committee examined on this part of the subject, have expressed a strong opinion of the inconvenience produced by the conduct of the Bank, in diminishing their notes in circulation, and in restricting their discounts.

One of these persons is of opinion, that an increased quantity of bank notes, proportioned to the increased occasion for them, must tend to prevent a demand for guineas rather than to promote it; and that if the quantity of notes issued is very considerably less than the occasions of the mercantile world require, a run upon the Bank will be the consequence. He is of opinion also, that the directors of the Bank do not avail themselves of the full extent of their credit; and that the caution necessary to be observed by private bankers in the amount of their bills, does not apply to the case of the Bank of England, for several reasons which he assigns. A great quantity of bank notes, in his opinion, is absolutely necessary for the circulation of the metropolis; and that in this respect, it is immaterial whether these notes are issued for advances made to government, or in discounts to private persons, except that in the last case, those whose bills are discounted to a greater extent, may suppose that more relief is granted to them. He allows, however, that as the Bank discounts, even in time of war, at 5*l.* per cent there may be a greater disposition to borrow of the Bank at 5*l.* per cent than it may be prudent always for the Bank to comply with.

Another of those gentlemen is of opinion, that the resolution of the Bank to restrict their discounts, excited an alarm and distrust that led to an increase of the drain of their cash; that it has contributed also to the forced sale and depreciation of public securities, and to other embarrassments occasioned by an insufficient supply of bank notes and cash; which supply has not kept pace with the demand arising from the employment and circulation of active capital, particularly for the last fifteen months: and he also is of opinion, that it would not signify materially to the public, whether the quantum of Bank notes introduced into circulation, was created by discounting bills for the merchants, or by advances to government.

The committee have judged it right to state the causes assigned by these gentlemen, of the distress that has lately prevailed from the want of sufficient means of circulation in commercial transactions: the committee, however, do not mean to decide whether the Bank directors might not have solid reasons for their conduct in this respect, or to convey any opinion on this doubtful and delicate question; but conceive it their duty to call the attention of the House to a point of so great importance, and refer the House to the arguments stated more at large in the evidence.

The committee have thus gone through the

chief points which have occurred in their inquiry respecting the causes which produced the order in council of the 26th of February last, as resulting from the evidence taken by them, and the accounts laid before them. They submit the same to the consideration of the House; but as the minutes of their proceedings are inserted in the former part of this Report, and as the House is thereby possessed of the evidence on the whole of this subject, in great detail, the members of it will be enabled to supply any omissions, and to correct any defects which may be found in this summary.

The committee being desirous of confining themselves to those matters on which they have thought proper to call evidence, and sensible of the difficulty (even at all times) of appreciating the extent and influence of alarm, forbear from adverting to the effects produced upon the state of pecuniary transactions and circulation, by the apprehensions of invasion generally prevalent towards the close of the last year, and in the beginning of the present, but of which the operation must doubtless have been considerable. Nor will they attempt to estimate how far the interruption given to the banking operations of many great commercial cities, by the troubles and calamities which have agitated Europe, and the entire ruin of many commercial houses and establishments, may have tended to derange the accustomed course and confidence of general circulation.

The committee think it sufficient merely to enumerate considerations of such general notoriety, and to submit them, without farther observation, to the wisdom of the House.

The King's Message respecting Loans to Ireland, and the Emperor, and for a Vote of Credit.] April 29. Mr. Pitt presented the following Message from his Majesty:

“GEORGE R.

“His majesty recommends it to the House of Commons, to consider of enabling his majesty to make remittances, from time to time, to be applied to his service in Ireland, in such manner as shall be approved by the parliament of that kingdom, to an amount not exceeding 1,500,000*l.* on provision being made by the parliament of Ireland for defraying the interest and charges of a loan to that amount.

“And his majesty further recommends it to the House, to consider of guaranteeing a loan on account of his ally the Emperor, to be applied to making good the advances, to the amount of 1,600,000*l.*, which have already been made to his imperial majesty, and to defray the charge

of such farther advances as his majesty may, from time to time, direct to be made in the course of the present year, to an amount not exceeding two millions.

“His majesty trusts, that he shall experience the ready concurrence of his faithful Commons, at this important conjuncture, in a measure calculated to enable the Emperor the more effectually to continue his exertions for the support of the common cause, and for the attainment of a general peace, on secure and adequate terms; and his majesty relies on their zeal and affection to provide for enabling his majesty to defray such other extraordinary expenses as may be necessary for the public service, and to take such measures as the exigency of affairs may require.
G. R.”

Debate in the Commons on the King's Message respecting Loans to Ireland, and the Emperor, and for a Vote of Credit.] May 1. On the order of the day for going into a committee on the said Message,

Mr. Fox said, he did not mean to oppose the motion, but wished to have an answer to a question before the House proceeded to the business which was now before it. When we were hearing every day of what had passed at Portsmouth (the mutiny in the fleet), it was necessary to know something in that House officially upon that subject. The necessary arrangements which must take place in consequence of the late events, would create very considerable expense, for which parliament must provide. This was, in one point of view, of considerable importance; but in another point of view, the matter was of more importance than any consideration of the expense could be. It had in that view created more uneasiness in the mind of every thinking man in this country, than he chose at that moment to express. He had on a former day, asked, when it was probable that official information should come before the House? That question was then answered in a general way, by an intimation that a communication would be made to the House as soon as possible. Since which a considerable time had elapsed, and no communication had been made. He was therefore under the necessity of repeating his question.

Mr. Pitt said, that in the course of a day or two a sum of money would be proposed to be voted by parliament upon the subject alluded to.

The House having resolved itself into the committee,

Mr. Pitt said:—One part of his majesty's message recommends it to this House to consider of enabling his majesty to make remittances from time to time, to be applied to his service of Ireland. The other part is an application to enable his majesty to make advances to the Emperor from time to time in the present year, as well as to make provision for the advances which have been already made to his imperial majesty. The former of these comes under the vote of credit. I will not trouble the committee with any observations on that part which respects the aid to Ireland, because I believe, that upon that part of the subject there is no variety of opinion. But the other part of it is such, that I cannot even hope that there is no difference of opinion. I am aware that the motion with which I shall conclude will be objected to; but until I hear the objections, I shall content myself with stating very shortly the nature of the question which is now before the committee; which I shall detain by repeating to them arguments in favour of the general policy of our endeavouring, while the war continues, to avail ourselves of the co-operation of the Emperor, and of the propriety of our granting to him a pecuniary succour. It was contended, that while we are engaged in this war we should exert ourselves, as much as possible, in the prosecution of such measures as tend to a diversion of the force of the enemy. That general principle was hardly denied by any one. The only question has always been, "how far the inconvenience of sending remittances abroad could tend to counteract the advantages which must result to us from the vigorous co-operation of his imperial majesty?" In discussing that question, due attention has been paid to the topics of real economy, to the effect which foreign remittances from us would have on the course of exchange, to the effect which it would have on the internal state of the country, and the circumstances relative to the Bank. On the part of ministers it was contended, that the remittances proposed, and afterwards agreed to by parliament, were consonant with true policy even in point of economy; that the sums were small in proportion to the beneficial effects to be expected by the diversion which the Emperor would make. Such was the course of our arguments on the broad and general basis of the contest.

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On the narrower view of the question, we contended, that with reference to our credit at home, to the circulation of specie, to the period at which the Bank would be enabled to resume its payments in the usual manner, to every thing connected with our commercial credit at home, independent of our foreign trade and commerce, and the course of exchange, the advantages which we might gain by the diversion made by the Emperor was an advantage of a much higher value than that which could possibly be expected by our having withheld our foreign remittances. From the report of the Secret Committee on the Affairs of the Bank, it is evident that the cause which led to the necessity of deferring payments in cash, arose from no foreign remittance whatever. More remote causes contributed to that effect. They are many, each having its share in diminishing the cash in the Bank, and bringing it to the situation which compelled it to take the steps that were taken. It would be impossible to give to each of those remote causes its due share in producing the suspension of cash payments at the Bank. The question upon that subject is not to be determined easily; it not only requires that we should know how much specie or bullion was drained out of the country by the extraordinary expenses of the war, but also the various commercial transactions in which this country has been concerned with foreign parts. That, again, will involve the complicated questions of the cause of the balance of trade, the course of exchange, and a vast number of other topics, each in its turn having its share more or less in the draining of specie. But in viewing them all, I think it hardly possible for any one to entertain an opinion, that the remittances to the Emperor were the immediate, and much less the exclusive cause of the stoppage of payment by the Bank in cash. To what degree these remittances were any cause of that pressure is a point on which opinions are very various. But it is a great consolation to reflect, great as has been the drain upon us, that even while that drain continued, such was the effect of our flourishing commerce, that even in the course of last year, the course of exchange became more favourable to this country than it was at the beginning of it. It also appears, that circumstances of a temporary nature have had great effect in diminishing our specie. The late scarcity had more effect in drain-

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ing our specie than any loan that was sent to the Emperor. Since, notwithstanding all these causes, many of which have now ceased, the course of exchange has become more favourable even during the continuance of the pressure, there is great reason to be satisfied that our commerce is still flourishing. Perceiving that the drain on account of the scarcity of corn was one great cause, of the scarcity of specie, and perceiving that we are not likely to feel a similar evil, I see no reason why a moderate remittance to the Emperor ought to alarm us. Feeling it to be the general opinion of the country, that it is desirable to have the vigorous co-operation of the Emperor in this contest, and knowing we cannot expect that co-operation unless we afford pecuniary aid to his imperial majesty, I shall move a resolution to enable his majesty to make advances from time to time to the Emperor, to the amount of three millions and a half, to be repaid by his imperial majesty. The sum of 200,000*l.*, already voted is included in this sum, as also the 1,600,000*l.* already advanced to his imperial majesty, so that the sum now proposed to be advanced is 1,880,000*l.* He then moved, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that 1,880,000*l.* be granted to his majesty, to enable his majesty to make advances, by way of loan, for the service of the Emperor, at such times, and in such manner, as his majesty shall judge most expedient."

Mr. Fox said:—I flattered myself that, after the report of the committee on the affairs of the Bank, had been put into the hands of members, they would have seen the consequence of sending more money abroad in too alarming a point of view, to hear with patience the proposal which is now made to the committee; for however the right hon. gentleman may exult in the flourishing state of our commerce, however he may endeavour to diminish the effect of sending money to the Emperor, by comparing it with other causes which have produced the present scarcity of cash, and however he may deny what was never asserted that it was the exclusive cause of the scarcity—it is impossible to doubt that the sending of money to the Emperor has been a great and principal cause of the present scarcity of cash. The right hon. gentleman considers the importation of corn as one of the great causes of the drain of specie in this country. I admit it to be so. I hope a similar evil will not recur; but it is impossible to

be sure of that, since it must depend upon events that are yet to come. But the great evil with us now, is our own internal situation. Do you not feel the weight of the misfortunes of the present year? No; you cannot feel them, for they have not yet pressed upon you so much as they will when you endeavour to raise the money which has been voted. The proposition before us, states the necessity of a large loan, which this country is to guarantee for Ireland; a circumstance which ought to alarm every member. You will find that sum of a million and a half very considerable at this moment. You should think which is most necessary for you, assistance to Ireland, or assistance to the Emperor. In this view of things, I was never more surprised in my life than at the proposition before you. Think only of the time in which it comes. The minister refers to a triumphant argument, that the determination of parliament has already sanctioned the principle of sending money abroad. That sort of triumph which follows from the reflection, that a majority of parliament have confided in his opinion, and brought this country to its present calamity, certainly belongs to that right hon. gentleman; but I ask the committee, in what state it is that we now come to the question before us?—A state in which we do not know that the Emperor has not concluded peace. We do know that an armistice for six days has been agreed upon between the Emperor and the forces of the French Republic. I have read the accounts of this armistice. The Emperor, in alluding to his hopes of peace, says, that "he trusts the enemy will at length consent to accept equitable conditions," and makes use of general expressions about his not "derogating from the dignity of his imperial majesty, and the honour of the nation he has the happiness to govern; and that he confides in the support of his faithful subjects." I looked with care over the Vienna court gazette, and I could not see the name of Great Britain, nor one word about any ally of his imperial majesty. Why? Because the Emperor knows that the only object he has in view is to satisfy his own people; whence I conclude, that the Emperor may conclude a peace without consulting our interest. I should have thought that the minister would have waited the event of this armistice, before he called upon the House to vote this money to the Emperor. Additional information has arrived

in town this day stating "that the armistice is to be prolonged for three days;" what is to be gathered from this? Why, that they are in hopes of a negotiation, in which there is no probability of our interest being included, since we are not so much as mentioned. Where, in the name of God, is the hurry for this money being voted? What reason has the House to take a step so hazardous? Why so eager to vote again the money of the people? Whether this ally of our's will be compelled to make peace without us, I am not now anticipating. I think I see what is most probable in that particular. I do not wish to enter into any discussion upon that matter now; but I call upon the House to wait until we shall learn the event of the armistice that has been agreed on. If we wait, and find that peace has not been the consequence of the negotiation between the Emperor and the French, we may then hear the grounds upon which the negotiation was broken off, and not thus vote away the public money in the dark. But let me put another case: suppose the war should continue, will it not be necessary for us to know the points on which the proposed negotiation was broken off? Shall we vote money before we know that the points on which the Emperor insists are essential to the general interests of Europe? For any thing which we can know to the contrary, these two millions, which we are now called upon to vote to the Emperor, may be for the attainment of objects which may appear to us detrimental to the general interests of Europe. With regard to Belgium, that is a territory for which I presume the Emperor, in the present posture of affairs, will not very obstinately negotiate, or for the attainment of which he will risk the safety of his capital and his people. But let us suppose that the Emperor and the French should agree that certain provinces in the palatinate, or Bavaria, or in Italy should be held by any of the branches of the House of Austria, and that we should be of opinion that such a plan would be highly injurious to the balance of power in Europe, and should even be determined to oppose it as we had done in former wars; what, in such a case, would you think of voting away millions to facilitate the accomplishment of that which you would give as many millions more to oppose? All this you may be doing, for any thing you know to the contrary, and which you may avoid by only

waiting a few days. You are going to give your money to a power which, indeed, you call your ally, but which you do not know whether he is your ally or not, or whether he may not at this very moment be the ally of your enemy. It may be said, that when we vote this money to his majesty, it will be in the power of the executive government to defer the sending it away in case there should be any reason for it. To which I answer, that this House ought not to vote away the money of the people in that manner, the more especially when there can be nothing lost by taking time to wait for an event that may render the vote now proposed unnecessary, and even ridiculous. With respect to Ireland, I certainly shall not oppose the loan proposed; not that I do not think it extremely important; not that I do not think that a million and a half, even to the sister kingdom, is a great deal for Great Britain to grant in her present embarrassment. There is, however, nothing that we do not owe to Ireland; and therefore I cannot object to any aid that is proposed to her. But here I cannot help observing on the dreadful measures which have brought her into her present situation; on the dreadful measures that are still pursuing to bring her into still worse. When I see means used towards Ireland, such as were used towards our colonies in America; when I see the same temper observed; when I see the same vain hopes are entertained (vain, indeed!) of preserving dominion over our fellow subjects by force of arms; when I hear opinions openly avowed that are hostile to all good government; when I see that it is a part of the policy of the executive government to treat as rebels all who are discontented, when whole provinces are declared to be in a state of rebellion; when I reflect what the issue has been of such policy already; when I remember that thirty-six millions have been voted in this session already, and know our resources to be fast exhausting—when I reflect on all these things, I cannot proceed but with trembling hand; I cannot help fearing that, under the present system of government, we may do more harm than good by granting this vote even to the sister kingdom. The vote, however, I cannot oppose. With regard to the vote to the Emperor, I have no difficulty myself of meeting it with my direct negative, and shall move, "That you do leave the chair."

Mr. *Pitt* said:—The argument by which the right hon. gentleman enforces this delay, is simple and distinct. He says, that at this moment the Emperor may be engaged in separate negotiation, and that in the course of three days he may have concluded a separate peace with the enemy. But he admits, at the same time, that the government of this country, supposing such a peace to be concluded, would not put in execution the vote of this evening. The resolution, therefore, supposing it to be adopted, can at least do no harm. The right hon. gentleman does not state it as an event to be wished for by this country that such a peace should be concluded. If, then, this is an event to be deprecated, do we incur no risk by the delay which is now proposed? He predicts that the event will be known in three days; but is it not as likely that the negotiation may be protracted? that the issue may be suspended for a considerably longer time? and that the decision may not be known for a month or six weeks? And, taking this into consideration, will the right hon. gentleman contend that it will make no difference to our ally, and to the cause in which we are engaged, whether the House immediately adopt the resolution now proposed, or defer their decision to a future day? If the course of military events, or the unsuccessful issue of the pending negotiation, should render such a measure necessary, who is there that would wish to have lost even three days in deciding upon a measure for which he afterwards finds himself obliged to vote? Incalculable good, therefore, may be derived from immediate decision, and incalculable evil may be the result of delay. Will any one deny, that a vote of the parliament of England, passed with unanimity and decision, granting ample pecuniary succours to our ally, may materially affect the terms on which peace may be concluded? Does it not immediately affect the question of the Emperor making a separate peace? And if he is unfortunately driven to that extremity, will it not enable him to conclude a peace on better terms for himself, and consequently on better terms for this country? For it ought to be recollected, that whatever additional concessions he extorts from the enemy for himself, it is so much gained to us, since they will help to strike a balance of power more favourable to Great Britain.

Mr. *Fox* said:—The right hon. gentle-

man contends, that the committee ought to come to an immediate decision, because the vote may affect the terms on which peace may be concluded. But I ask, where is the probability, of its influencing the present negotiation? Was not an armistice granted, and not without some discussion of the terms, for only six days? and has it not been prolonged, not for an indefinite time, but for only three days more? How, then, is it possible that the vote of this night can affect a discussion which is probably already terminated? All I contend for is, a short delay till the issue of that negotiation be known, and if it is broken off, the points for which the war is to be continued.

Mr. *Pitt* contended, that a mail might reach Vienna in ten or twelve days, with an account of the vote of the committee; and that if the negotiation was then pending, it would materially affect the terms of discussion.

Mr. *Grey* said:—I think the committee should wait till they are informed of the issue of a negotiation which they know has been entered into. The right hon. gentleman talks of the great advantage of continental diversions. For my part, I think, we have had enough of these diversions already; but allowing them their value, I would ask, whether it is of more importance for this country at the present moment to create a diversion upon the continent, or to restore the credit of the Bank? And if the latter object is of higher importance, will not such an event be greatly retarded by remittances being sent to the Emperor.

Sir *W. Pulteney* could not agree with those who anticipated a great deal of mischief to the country from a loan to the Emperor. The balance of exchange was in our favour. Two millions was a sum too trifling to injure this country, and gradually remitted as it was to be, could be attended with none of those serious consequences predicted. The Emperor had acted upon the expectation that farther supplies were to be furnished. Would it be honourable then to stop now? He thought the sum ought to be voted immediately, and if possible with unanimity.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, that the worthy baronet, who was so much accustomed to large sums of money, might think this a trifling sum, but to him it appeared in a very different light. He believed that the Emperor, as well as other German princes, would be glad of the money; but

if he, as appeared from the intelligence brought by the mail, was to indemnify out of his private property, the inhabitants of the suburbs of Vienna for any damage they might sustain from the siege, he could not be so destitute of funds as was represented. But be his situation what it might, he was against the measure.

Mr. *Wilberforce* begged to put in his protest against the doctrine of the remittances to the Emperor having produced the necessity of the minute of council. He, who had coolly and cautiously weighed and examined all the circumstances relative to the Bank, could aver, that it was his firm belief that these remittances were of extremely small effect in producing that situation of the Bank. It was not a fair way of putting the question by asking whether a remittance abroad would be injurious to the affairs of the Bank? The question was whether, if the Emperor made a separate peace, and the whole force of the enemy should then be directed against this country, the Bank might not then be more affected, and the credit of the country thrown into a worse state?

After some farther conversation, the committee divided upon Mr. Fox's motion: Ayes, 58; Noes, 193. The resolution was then agreed to.

The King's Message respecting the Marriage of the Princess Royal.] May 3. Mr. *Pitt* presented the following Message from his Majesty:

“GEORGE R.

“His Majesty, having agreed to a marriage proposed between the Princess Royal and the hereditary Prince of Wirtembergh, has thought fit to communicate the same to this House. His majesty is fully persuaded, that this alliance with a Protestant prince, so considerable in rank and station, and who is connected with his majesty's royal family, by their common descent from the princess Sophia of Hanover, cannot but be acceptable to all his faithful subjects; and the many proofs which he has received of the affectionate attachment of this House to his person and family, leave him no room to doubt of the concurrence and assistance of this House, in enabling him to give such a portion to his eldest daughter as may be suitable to the honour and dignity of the Crown.—G. R.”

Resolved, *nem. con.* “That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to

return his majesty the Thanks of this House for his most gracious communication of the intended marriage between the Princess Royal and the hereditary Prince of Wirtembergh; to express the satisfaction of this House at this alliance with a Protestant prince so considerable in rank and station; and to assure his majesty, that the House will immediately proceed to the consideration of his majesty's gracious message, in such a manner as shall demonstrate the zeal, duty, and affectionate attachment of this House to his majesty, a just sense of the eminent virtues and merit of her Royal Highness, and a due regard to the honour and dignity of the royal family.”

Debate in the Lords on the Mutiny of the Seamen.] May 3. The Duke of *Bedford* asked, whether any of his majesty's ministers had it in charge, from his majesty, to make any communication upon the recent important transactions which had occurred in the marine department? If no such communication was made, he should find himself called upon to bring a subject, so connected with the best interests of the country, before their lordships, by moving for the production of certain papers connected with it.

Earl *Spencer* replied, that he had it not in command from his majesty to make any communication to the House, nor did he foresee that any communication would be made upon that subject.

Earl *Howe* said, that as his name had been mentioned in the transaction alluded to, he had anxiously waited for a suitable opportunity to explain to their lordships the part which he had acted in the business. Had any censure been attached to his professional character, he would have looked to another quarter for an inquiry into his conduct; but as the blame which had fallen upon him in the present instance related to his conduct in a capacity different from that of an officer, he looked to their lordships for his vindication. The explanation, therefore, for which he was called upon, he should take an opportunity of giving when the noble duke brought the subject before the House. He expressed a wish, however, that for the sake of the service, the business had never been brought under discussion, for the legislature would be brought by it into a most delicate situation: either they must approve of transactions which there was no man who did not wish had never hap-

pened, or they must withhold that approbation, and thus acknowledge that they have made concessions, under the pressure of the moment, which they thought it improper to confirm.

Lord *Grenville* agreed entirely with lord Howe, as to the inexpediency and impolicy of bringing the subject under discussion, and entreated their lordships to allow matters to rest as they were. He had no hesitation in declaring, that he should steadily oppose any motion which might be made for the production of papers relating to a subject of such a delicate nature, that it could not be agitated without risking the most serious danger.

The Duke of *Clarence* declined giving any opinion upon the propriety of introducing any discussion upon the present subject, in a political point of view; but as a professional man, he deprecated such a discussion as pregnant with the most dangerous consequences to the service.

The Earl of *Carlisle* did not presume to give any opinion upon the propriety or impropriety of entering into the discussion of transactions to which no one was a stranger at the present moment; but he wished to know, whether the period for discussion was never to come; whether their lordships, as forming one branch of the legislature, were to be kept in perpetual ignorance of events which were the most serious in their nature of any that had ever occurred in the country, and which had shaken the pillars of the state to their very foundation? With respect to the period which might be the most fit for agitating matters certainly of great delicacy, there was no man for whose opinion he should have so much deference, as that of the noble earl; but as a member of that House, he could not assent to the doctrine of government holding perpetual silence upon these transactions.

The Duke of *Bedford* said, he was too well acquainted with the issue of motions in that House, which the king's ministers intimated their intentions to oppose. He certainly, therefore, should not make an attempt to bring the present subject into discussion. But if he could conceive any terms in which he could couch a motion for the production of the papers connected with it, he would make that motion now. As the transactions, however, to which he referred, were without a parallel in history, for he knew of no instance but the present, in which the ministers of the king had entered into correspondence and

negotiation with any body of his majesty's subjects; to conceive the proper terms for a motion on such a subject was no easy task. If any mode occurred to him of obtaining these papers, he should propose it to the House on a future day, without any preface or comment.

Lord *Sydney* deprecated all discussion upon a subject of so great delicacy as the present, as it could do no good, and might produce much harm.

Earl *Howe* rose and said:—Between the second week in last February and the middle of March, being then confined by illness at Bath, I received, by the post, several petitions, purporting to be transmitted from different ships of the channel-fleet. They were all exact copies of each other, limited solely to a request for an increase of pay, that the seamen might be able to make better provision for their families, decently expressed, but without any signature. I could not reply to applications which were anonymous, nor acknowledge the receipt of them to parties unavowed and unascertained. About four or five of the petitions first received, though differing a little in the handwriting, were obviously dated by the same person; and I had therein farther reason to think that they were fabricated by some malicious individual, who meant to insinuate the prevalence of a general discontent in the fleet. Not resting, however, on this conclusion, I wrote to the officer at Portsmouth, to whom I was naturally to expect such applications would, in my absence, be addressed, to inquire whether any such dissatisfaction existed in the fleet. The answer was, that no such appearance had been heard of there, and it was supposed the petitions had been framed for the purpose I suspected. On the morning of the 22d of March, the day after I was able to come to town, one of the lords of the admiralty, now absent on service, happening to call on me, I related these particulars to him, showed him the petitions, and sent them the same day to his house, in the office, that they might be communicated to the noble earl who presides at that board. Of the subsequent events I have no other knowledge but such as is to be obtained in the daily papers. Demands for an increase of pay, by a fleet or army on service, are not to be discussed, I apprehend, in anonymous correspondence.

Lord *Grenville* believed, that every man in the kingdom was perfectly convinced,

that the noble earl had acted, through a long life, the part of a virtuous and honourable supporter of the rights and interests of his country. He deprecated any farther discussion of the subject, and moved to adjourn.—Adjourned.

Debate in the Commons on an Increase of Pay to Seamen and Marines.] May 8. The House having resolved itself into a committee of supply,

Mr. Pitt rose. He said, that in consequence of the late transactions which had made it necessary to raise the wages of the men of his majesty's fleet, and in pursuance of the estimate furnished for that purpose, he felt it incumbent on him to propose to the committee to grant a sum to enable his majesty to provide for the various exigencies likely to be incurred as specified in that estimate. He was ready to acknowledge, that he felt peculiar embarrassment in stating the supply, because it was always understood, that where any increase was proposed, certain grounds should be given to proceed on, for the purpose of ascertaining the propriety of that increase. This argument applied very strongly to the measure which he was about to submit to the judgment of the committee, as the increase intended was of a very considerable nature, and such as was unavoidable during the continuance of the war. It might therefore be expected, that the different rates of wages, various data, circumstances, and other matters would be brought forward to show the progression necessary to be observed. Yet he should say, that, from every view of prudence and policy, and with every possible attention to the delicacy of the case, he did not feel himself at liberty to enter into a formal detail of the circumstances that had for some time past engaged the serious attention of the House. He should, therefore, rather rely on, and even claim the silent indulgence of the House, than enter into any detail of the very important subject, which was then proposed for their acquiescence. At the same time that he confessed his inability to discuss the business in the regular way, it was necessary for him to declare, that as to any opportunity of information which might be expected from government on the subject, it could not be too strongly impressed on the minds of gentlemen, that too much caution could not be used in an affair in which the slightest misrepresentation might

produce the most serious consequences. He had sufficient ground to suppose, that nothing could so effectually terminate the difficulties to which he might be understood to allude, as a knowledge of the vote of the House on the object which then engaged their attention. He, therefore, did not hesitate to say, that from the past circumstances, and the present general situation of things, he felt it his duty to ask and solicit the silent judgment of the House. In alluding to the estimate before the committee, he trusted, that the particular amount would not be the chief object of their attention; and he should, therefore, without any more preliminary observations, state at once the different sums necessary to be voted. In the first instance, the amount of the various allowances of wages, increasing in a proportionate ratio of 5s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 3s. 6d. per month, or, in other words, the respective increase of monthly pay for able seamen, ordinary seamen, and landsmen, with 2d. per day to the non-commissioned officers of marines, and 2½d. to the privates, would produce a sum total of yearly 351,000l. To which the yearly increase of ¼th of the whole victualling of the navy was to be added, making at the rate of 19s. per month per man for 13 months, the sum of 185,000l., and forming together the sum total of 536,000l. It was his duty to state the probable amount of the increased expense in wages, and in victualling for one year, yet he should not state it actually for the rest of the year at a rate higher than 19s. per month, which was the old rate allowed in the navy, and the committee could not but be convinced of the necessity of a proportionate addition to be then made, for, in forming the estimates it was found impossible to deviate from the old standard or rate of calculation, which was 19s. per month allowance for victualling. It should also be observed, that there were very different periods at which the payments of the wages of ships became due, and considering all these circumstances together, and comparing their relation with each other, he should merely state the supply proposed to be voted to provide for the increased wages and victualling of the seamen and marines of the fleet for nine months, which he should take at an average sum of 372,000l. He should, therefore, move "That a sum not exceeding 372,000l. be granted to his majesty, on account, towards enabling his

majesty to defray the expense to be incurred by an increase to the pay of the Seamen and Marines of his majesty's fleet, according to the addition directed by his majesty's order in council of the 3rd of May 1797, and by the proposed issue of full allowance of provisions."

Mr. Fox said:—I certainly shall vote for the resolution; but I cannot do it silently without betraying my constituents. The right hon. gentleman deprecates discussion at this moment, as being likely to increase our difficulties. It is not, Sir, to discussion, but to silence that we owe that difficulty. Had this House interposed at the commencement of this business, instead of indulging the ministers with the scandalous delay of a fortnight, for which delay I hope ministers will be made seriously to answer, I verily believe we should not have heard any thing of the misfortunes which have recently happened. The minister has said that much of what has recently happened was owing to misrepresentation and consequent misunderstanding, and that to debate the subject is not the way to put off the evil; that it can only be removed by voting a remedy for it in silence. I say that silence has been preserved in this House in order to give him an opportunity of doing away the effect of any misrepresentation or consequent misunderstanding that had taken place when we heard of this business first, and to avoid any future misunderstanding. It has not produced that effect; nor do I think it was well adapted to produce it; for I am convinced that secrecy is but seldom, if ever, so good a mode of avoiding a misunderstanding as discussion. I will not go into the detail of the conduct of the admiralty upon this most delicate and important business, during the Easter recess. Indeed I have not, nor has this House, any authentic information upon it. From what I have heard, however, I have strong doubts of the propriety of that conduct: it seems to have been that of neither denying nor granting, but an endeavour to bargain with the seamen, and to offer them less than it was reasonable they should have, since it was less than is now proposed to be voted. The evil of this is, that you have increased, instead of diminishing, the suspicion of the seamen. This House might on the Monday or the Wednesday following the notification of the discontents have voted that which is now proposed, and it is inexcusable in ministers to have delayed it so long. But most ex-

traordinary indeed it is that silent confidence in ministers should be now demanded of this House. After seeing the criminal conduct of ministers upon various occasions, but most strikingly upon this if this House continues its silent confidence, it will be little less blameable than ministers have been. This is not a time, in which we should repose confidence in administration generally; but, least of all in such an administration. Ministers cannot say they were not warned of the danger of delay upon this most important of all subjects. I asked the minister as early as I could what was intended to be done, and entreated that he would not suffer any delay to take place. I repeated my questions and intreaties, and if I have any reason to blame myself at all for the part I took, it is for not having repeated them still oftner. That it should be supposed that any good can arise out of secrecy and silence is ridiculous. The thing is absolutely impossible. Does the right hon. gentleman really think that not only now, but for ever, the cause of this discontent is to remain a secret? Does this House really mean to say after what has happened at Portsmouth at the commencement of this misunderstanding and since, that they will never inquire into the cause of it? Are we so abandoned as to determine never to have any responsibility upon ourselves, but to leave the whole of it, under a blind confidence, to the executive government to manage? I say, we ought to take responsibility upon ourselves: it is our first and greatest duty, without the due performance of which we shall be worse than useless to the public. If we neglect that duty, what may be the effect of it. What has happened may happen again. What is it that has already appeared before us?—that grievances have been complained of, and have not been sufficiently attended to. The cause of these complaints cannot be fully known. I declare, upon my honour, I do not know the cause. All I know is what I have seen related in newspapers, as having passed between the Admiralty and the delegates of the fleet. I never heard how far the Admiralty conceded to, or opposed, the wishes of the seamen. Why, then, how am I to do my duty to the people of England, in voting away their money on circumstances that are more important, perhaps, than any that ever came before us, without knowing the real cause of that vote? I say that we ought to know that

cause; for, without it, how can we be satisfied that the remedy is adequate to the evil? I say, also, that if ministers were as successful in all their plans as they have been unsuccessful; if they had fulfilled all their promises as uniformly as they have disregarded them; if they had gratified our wishes in proportion as they have disappointed our expectations, it would even then be the bounden duty of the House, in this most critical of all cases, to call for a full explanation of the causes of this discontent. I hope the right hon. gentleman will state them fully to the House at some future period. I think he ought to state, even now, what were the circumstances which led to the misunderstanding between the fleet and the Admiralty after the first promise was made to the sailors. This he ought to do now, in order that we may know whether the vote which is before us is a complete, or a partial compliance with the wishes of those who are the objects of it. To endeavour to pass it by in silence is silly. To think that it may be smothered, is the weakest of all possible hopes, by which you will resemble children, who shut their eyes and think that nobody can see them. I know that much more misunderstanding is likely to follow silence than discussion. I therefore wish the matter to be discussed. I know there are many who think that the inconvenience of popular assemblies are great, on account of the publicity of their proceedings, and hence has arisen great error in giving to ministers confidence when they ask it. But the present ministers seem to think, that the less they are called upon to explain, the more danger there is in their attempting it, and they call for confidence in exact proportion as the necessity of explanation is urgent.

Mr. *Pitt* said, he had thought a silent vote upon this subject the best, and therefore he had recommended it. He thought so still, for he was not shaken in that opinion by any thing that had been said by the right hon. gentleman; and it was singular enough, that that very person who called for so much information, declared he should vote for the resolution after he had heard the explanation that had been given, although he declared, at the same time, that he knew no more about it than any other member of the House; a pretty convincing proof that what he had heard already was sufficient to satisfy him of the propriety of the present motion.

Mr. *Fox* said, he considered the infor-

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mation which the newspapers furnished, and the notoriety of the case, as sufficient to induce him to give his vote for the resolution. He knew that he was voting for an expense that was necessary, but without knowing whether that expense was all that was necessary, and whether it was likely to produce the effect desired. What he complained of chiefly in the conduct of the right hon. gentleman was, that a fortnight had elapsed before the House was informed whether any promises had been made, and whether they were to be adhered to. If measures had been taken immediately to ascertain these points, the House would not now have been in the dark upon the subject; they would not have been at a loss to know whether the new disturbances, which rumour stated to have taken place, had arisen from the circumstance of the agreement not being confirmed, or that enough had not been conceded. Transactions like those that had recently occurred, certainly would have been highly important at every period, but in the present situation of the country they were of unequalled importance. If they called themselves the representatives of the people, if they really felt any love for their country, could they be satisfied that the accomplishment of the object for which the vote was to pass, was placed in hands worthy of so great a trust. Could they say that they had done what they ought to do for the security of their dearest interests? Could they tell their constituents that they dare not inquire into circumstances so intimately connected with their safety and their existence? If such was the opinion of the House, the difficulties of our situation must inevitably terminate in utter ruin.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, he certainly should vote for the resolution, but there was a question he should propose to the right hon. gentleman, which might be answered without involving that discussion which he wished to avoid, or that mischief which he apprehended. In allusion to the new disturbances which were said to exist, the right hon. gentleman had said, that nothing was so likely to restore tranquillity as an immediate vote in favour of the resolution. Why, then, did not the right hon. gentleman avail himself of the opportunity of submitting that vote sooner, when it might have prevented the disturbances it was to appease? Why was it that the vote was to be proposed when information was received that new dis-

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turbances had broken out? Why did he not take immediate steps in consequence of the promises which were made? Why, instead of the slow, procrastinating mode that had been followed, had not the right hon. gentleman come with a message from the throne, recommending the House to take measures to carry into effect what had been done? How could they rely that what they were to vote would be properly carried into effect? The first step ought to have been a communication to the House, and such a vote as this passed with unanimity, would have perfectly satisfied the seamen. Misrepresentation might have induced them to do what they ought not to have done; but the right hon. gentleman ought to have prevented the possibility of such misrepresentation. He was convinced, that the conciliation would be more effectual, if accompanied with a vote of censure on ministers, for not coming to parliament sooner.

The resolution was agreed to *nem. con.*

May 9. Mr. *Whitbread* said, that in consequence of what had passed last night, and considering the impression of men's minds relative to the disturbances at Portsmouth, he now rose, not to enter into the causes of that affair, but to ask the chancellor of the exchequer, why the proposition moved last night, was not brought forward on an earlier day? Had this been done the disastrous consequences which had taken place might have been prevented. Unless a satisfactory explanation was given of a delay so fatal in its consequences, and for which the right hon. gentleman was responsible to the House and to the country, it was his intention to move a direct vote of censure against the chancellor of the exchequer, for gross neglect of duty in not submitting the subject sooner to the House.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that he was responsible for what he had done in his official capacity, and whenever that vote of censure was proposed, it would be time to state to the House the circumstances upon which he should be ready to rest his justification. As to the question proposed by the hon. gentleman, undoubtedly as far as misconception and misrepresentation had arisen from the sense of the House not having been taken upon the subject, no man could lament more than he did that any delay had intervened. But it was a great mistake to imagine that no steps had been taken to forward the business, and to pre-

pare it for being submitted to the House. Upon the 26th of April the memorial of the lords of the Admiralty, agreeably to the usual forms, had been referred to a committee of the council. That committee made their report, which was submitted to his majesty. All those forms, which the regular conduct of the business required, necessarily consumed some time. After the approbation of the king was given, estimates were ordered to be prepared to be laid before the House. Meanwhile, the subject had been repeatedly before parliament, not for the purpose of an express vote, but in a way that showed the business to be in train. He had expressly stated that there would be a communication on the subject to enable the House to come to a vote, consistently with the usual forms. As early as the day on which the general state of the Ways and Means of the country was laid before the House, he had distinctly stated that the provision, then to be made, was independent of any additional allowance. Thus, upon several occasions, such steps had been taken as could leave no doubt whatever, of the intention of the executive government to submit the subject to parliament, as soon as the regular preliminary forms were observed. Certainly, all that speed had not been employed, which, if any danger of misconception had been apprehended, might have been used, and which was to be lamented, if that delay had given room for the misrepresentations which had taken place, and the consequences which had ensued. Such was the candid explanation of the delay which had taken place, and having given it to the House, he left it to the hon. gentleman to bring forward his motion whenever he thought proper. He now had to inform the House, that in consequence of the vote last night, and of the general wish that the earliest opportunity should be given for the measure to produce the desired effect, by being put, as soon as possible, into the shape of an act of parliament, he was desirous that steps should be taken for procuring, as soon as possible, the assent of every branch of the legislature. For this purpose it was his intention immediately to submit a proposition to the House. It would be observed, that there was part of what was meant to be granted, which not being usually stated on estimate, was not comprehended in the vote, but which would be included in the act. Waving, for the present, then, any

discussion which was personal to himself, he hoped the House would see the propriety of immediately coming to the subject to which he alluded.

Mr. *Fox* said, that after the explanation which the right hon. gentleman had just given, he could not help thinking that the delay complained of, was an intolerable and fatal neglect of duty. In his opinion, ministers were guilty, not only judging that delay after the fact, but before the fact. The history of the transaction was, that in Easter week complaints had existed in the fleet, meetings of delegates had taken place, and various other circumstances had happened. A letter was written from the Admiralty upon the subject of these complaints, which stamped upon them a character of incapacity the most flagrant, or want of talent for acting upon a great and difficult crisis, unexampled in the annals of any administration. This letter not having produced any effect, a second had been sent, with which the seamen were said to be satisfied, and on which they were to return to their duty. This transaction had taken place on Sunday morning, the 23rd of April. Under all the circumstances, he would submit to any impartial mind, whether this was an occasion for tardy forms and official delays? Was it not the duty of ministers, after they had recognized the delegates with whom they treated, after they had made a promise, to have lost no time in completing the transaction? Yet, in stating the rapidity with which he had acted in pursuance of the usual forms, it appeared that the first date of any step was the 26th of April, three days after the agreement had been made. Was not this a matter upon which the utmost dispatch ought to have been used? Delays till the opinion of council was taken! Good God! after pardon had been proclaimed for what had passed, when the active part of the council were the men who had agreed to the transaction to be considered, and who were bound to carry it into effect, could there be any doubt of the opinion of council; was any delay necessary till it was pronounced? But even the order of council to which these tedious steps and formal proceedings were to lead, appeared on the 3rd of May, and five days elapsed before the subject was submitted to the House. Estimates, forsooth, were to be prepared. As if the minister really could not guess what was to be the nature of the order of

council, and could not therefore give orders for estimates to be prepared! If this country was doomed to ruin, was ever country ruined by incapacity so gross, by misconduct so unparalleled? Was this a time to adhere to petty formalities, to procrastinate for the production of an estimate? The right hon. gentleman said, that he had had it in contemplation to bring forward the subject; that he had alluded to it in his speech upon the budget. But how were the seamen to know his intentions? It might be asked, why had not he himself, and those who thought with him, pressed the subject? He had indeed repeatedly urged the right hon. gentleman; he was not sufficiently acquainted with the facts. He was ignorant how far the Admiralty had conceded, how far the delegates had given up any part of their demands; it was, therefore, impossible to move any thing upon the subject. He expected not only that estimates would have been produced, but that a full account of the transaction was to be communicated to the House. The right hon. gentleman had even mentioned the distance from Portsmouth as a cause of delay. If the affair related merely to money arrangements previously settled, the distance from Portsmouth could have nothing to do with the delay. If every thing was adjusted when the lords of the Admiralty left Portsmouth, and wanted only confirmation, the guilt of those who allowed such an interval of delay to elapse, ought not to pass unpunished. A conduct, to which was owing the loss of the innocent lives of men, whoever they were who had fallen, whether high or low, men to whom the country was highly indebted, ought not to be passed over unnoticed by the House. Whatever were the feelings of regret experienced by the right hon. gentleman for the delay that had taken place, he gave him credit for those feelings; for what man could exist conscious of the calamities his conduct had occasioned without feelings of regret? Yet that conduct ought not to pass without the marked disapprobation of the House.

Mr. *Whitbread* said, that after the unsatisfactory explanation given by the chancellor of the exchequer, he should postpone the motion he intended to make, no longer than till after the proposition now to be brought forward on the subject, was disposed of.

Mr. *Sheridan* was confident that not a

doubt remained in the mind of any gentleman of the shameful misconduct of his majesty's ministers; nor had he any doubt but that they all felt regret at what had happened, and indignation at those who were the cause of it, as well as contempt for their incapacity. He should himself, if his hon. friend had not given notice of it, have brought forward an immediate censure upon ministers for having delayed this measure, but that he wished that nothing should now stand in the way of passing the bill. The minister's apology for the delay that had taken place, was not to be endured. He now pretended to say that he waited for an estimate of the expense which would attend this measure. Did he really believe that the public were to be so insulted? He could have brought this estimate down to the House the very hour after the king's proclamation was issued. This was such shameful neglect, that he trusted the House would feel it, as he was sure the public felt it, with abhorrence. The minister was absolutely without excuse for the delay that had taken place. He knew that the sailors were dissatisfied. He now came forward with his unavailing regret that any disturbances had happened. He pretended that they arose from misunderstanding. Could there be any wonder at that misunderstanding? Had the sailors not a promise from the Admiralty, and was not that promise afterwards treated with apparent indifference by the king's ministers? Did they not delay the measure which could alone give it sanction? Had the sailors, therefore, no reason for doubting the sincerity of the minister? He could not but foresee that, when the order was given for the fleet to weigh anchor, jealousy would remain among the sailors, and therefore he was answerable for the consequences that ensued.—With respect to the notice of his hon. friend, he hoped he would not pursue it this day, because the minister might complain of want of candour in bringing such a matter forward on a sudden. The more opportunity that was given him to prepare himself, the better. What was now proposed to be granted to the sailors was nothing more than justice. At the time that he said this, he must not omit to state distinctly his decided disapprobation of the mode in which those claims were insisted upon. It was unfair, and inconsistent with the brave, generous, and open character of British seamen; nor had he a doubt but

there had been a foul interference with them, and means of the basest nature used to induce them to take the steps which they had taken. If men were oppressed, they ought to be relieved by their country. But however just their complaints were, they ought to complain in a regular way. If there were men among them, as he believed there were, that advised the sailors to put their country into such peril as it stood in at this moment, for the mere purpose of having their objects carried, such men were the basest of traitors. He suspected there were persons of this description; and the evil was of the most alarming kind, when the enemy were actually preparing in the most formidable manner against us. He that listening to the suggestions of such foes to this country would never have been the fault of the brave British seamen. The country were to look to the ministers for the great cause of all this; and we were now in a situation in which common measures would not do, and therefore he should have to propose one of an uncommon kind. If he were told that by proposing it, he encroached on executive government, he should answer, that executive government had encroached upon the representative part already so much as to make his measure absolutely necessary. He thought that the sailors had a distrust in the promises of the executive government; and, perhaps, they might not have sufficient faith in the pledge of that House. They had evidently shown they had no faith in those who had hitherto negotiated with them—if accounts were true, as he was afraid they were; for it appeared by them that when the town was lulled yesterday into a sanguine hope that the disturbances were over, and that the London had sailed down to St. Helen's, and that admiral Colpoys was gone with her, the delegates went on shore to view the dead bodies of those who fell in the scuffle. If this was true, as he feared it was, he would ask what was to be done with the fleet? What measure was to be taken? Had any been taken to prevent the most horrid of all calamities? He believed none. This was a signal instance, and a fresh one, of the deplorable incapacity of the present ministers in this critical conjuncture. By their criminal and murderous delay, had they brought on this dreadful evil. At their door should be laid the blood that had been shed upon this occasion. And yet, after all this, the right

hon. gentleman came to the House, and asked for confidence, as if nothing was the matter. He gave no answer to any question put to him, but desired the House to pass the whole matter by in silence. What would be the effect if the House followed the example set them by the minister? A sullen silence was to be observed. What inference would the sailors draw from this? Why, that parliament had passed this measure unwillingly, and would abandon it as soon as they had an opportunity of so doing. He hoped, therefore, that it would be expressed as the general sentiment of the House, that they granted this as the right of the British navy. If the other House was sitting, he thought the Commons ought to send a message to desire their immediate concurrence to the appointment of a committee, consisting of a small number of the members of each House. It could not be a question on which any party feelings could operate. He should therefore propose that a joint committee be appointed, to have power to send for persons and papers, to sit from time to time, and to adjourn from place to place, as occasion might require.

Mr. *Whitbread* said, that, on the suggestion of his hon. friend, he would postpone his motion until to-morrow.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the time in which the motion alluded to by the hon. gentleman who spoke last, was brought forward, was to himself personally a matter of indifference, so that it did not interfere with the progress of the business which was now before the House. He knew not what he was to understand by a motion for a joint committee of the two Houses, except it was, to supersede all the functions of the executive government. On such a question, what would be the decision of the House, he could not suffer himself to doubt. He would now move, "That a message be sent to the Lords, to desire that their lordships will continue sitting for some time."

The motion was agreed to. After which, Mr. *Pitt* brought in a bill, founded on the resolution of yesterday, for granting an Increase of Pay and Allowance to the Seamen and Marines. The bill passed through all its stages without opposition, and was carried up to the Lords.

Debate in the Lords on an Increase of Pay to Seamen and Marines.] May 9. The Bill for granting an Increase of Pay to Seamen and Marines was brought up

from the Commons, and read a first time. On the motion, that it be read a second time,

The Earl of *Suffolk* said, he conceived this to be the stage of the bill on which it was proper for him to put the question to the noble secretary of state, which he had come down for the purpose of asking with an anxiety bordering on distress. He wished, in the first place, to know why the bill was not brought in a fortnight ago, and what were the causes of the delay which had taken place, and which had produced such fatal consequences?

The Duke of *Athol*, thinking that incalculable mischief might be the consequence of any discussion on a subject of so much delicacy, expressed a wish that the bill should go through its several stages without any observations being made upon it. They had already experienced the fatal effects of the conversation which had taken place on a former evening having been misrepresented. He therefore entreated their lordships to allow the bill to go as quickly as possible through its several stages, in the hope, that, in consequence of it, the deluded seamen would return to their duty, and receive with gratitude this boon from their country.

The Earl of *Suffolk* asked, if misrepresentation was the cause of the recent calamities, on which side that misrepresentation had originated? It had arisen not on his side of the House, but on the other, and in consequence of the concealment, if not of the duplicity of ministers.

The Duke of *Athol* did not allude to any misrepresentation which had taken place in that House, but to the misrepresentations of those who were either incapable of discerning the meaning of what had passed or who perverted it from an evil design.

Lord *Grenville* said, that no species of invective, however bitter, and no declamation, however irritating should provoke him to depart from the duty which he owed to the public, by entering into a discussion which would highly injure the best interests of the country. He little expected to have heard of different sides of the House on that night; different sides of the House on such a question! On such an occasion, it was the duty of their lordships to act with unanimity.

The Duke of *Bedford* said, he rose for the purpose, not of giving ministers an opportunity of amending their declaration, and of removing the misconceptions to

which it had given rise: Discussion he thought improper; explanation he thought necessary. Discussion and explanation were however equally obnoxious to ministers, for secrecy alone could screen their conduct from censure and their characters from infamy. He should not now move for information upon the subject, but he pledged himself to do it on a future day.

The Earl of *Moir* said, that the explanation desired went only to a single point, and it was idle and childish to evade it; namely, why the measure now adopted was not taken earlier?

Lord *Sydney* deprecated all discussion, and threatened, if it was proceeded in, to move that the House be cleared.

The Duke of *Grafton* said, that the present was one of the greatest calamities with which the country was ever afflicted, and arose chiefly from procrastination. If these positions were correct, would ministers be hardy enough to say that the country ought not to be informed of the causes of that procrastination? He was willing to draw a veil over all that had passed; but when they were putting off the definitive settlement of the business from day to day, did they recollect the promise of the first lord of the Admiralty, and that his majesty's royal word was pledged that the measure should be carried into effect? Had he been first lord of the Admiralty he would not have quitted the elbow of the minister until he had got his promise carried into execution.

The Lord Chancellor said, that all the noble lords who pressed for explanation, agreed in censuring the procrastination that had taken place. He contended, therefore, that those who were for entering into discussion at the present moment partook of the criminality imputed to those who were said to be the authors of the delay. He entreated their lordships to consider, that whilst they were entering upon topics which might be agitated at a future day, the delay which was thereby occasioned to the passing of the bill, might be putting the lives of the best and bravest men in the country in peril. It was like stopping to inquire how a fire was kindled, before they employed the engines to extinguish it. He only asked a flag of truce for one night; that the bill might be passed, and sent to Portsmouth immediately.

The Duke of *Bedford* begged only to ask the noble secretary of state one ques-

tion, which, if fairly answered, would completely put an end to all discussion. The question was, whether ministers intended to carry into execution all the promises made by the lords commissioners of the Admiralty to the seamen?

Lord *Grenville* thought it necessary to deny, in the most express terms, that he was, in his official capacity, bound to answer any question that might be put to him, however unseasonably by individuals. It was a doctrine which could not be too forcibly stated to the House, that his majesty's ministers and parliament ought both to be tried by their own acts, and not by any gross and shameful misrepresentations that were maliciously fabricated to pervert the public mind, and prejudice it against government. It would be peculiarly hard if ministers were to be tried on the ground of answers extorted from them by questions insidiously and irregularly put, and then carefully conveyed to the public. From answers extorted in that way, the grossest misrepresentations went abroad through those disorderly and unconstitutional channels, though acquiesced in, the public papers. He believed that the inconsiderate discussion which had been brought forward by a noble duke on this subject a few nights ago, and the shameful misrepresentations which had been made respecting it, had been the cause of all the calamity which had happened since. The question which that noble duke had just put to him, certainly went to raise still farther doubts in the minds of the seamen. He believed there was no intention in it, but it could not fail of having that effect. He had no doubt, however, but the present bill would convince them of his majesty's firm determination to fulfil all the gracious indulgencies he had promised them; and he could not conceive how any one could suppose for a moment that ministers did not intend to fulfil every tittle of promise and engagement which had been entered into by the lords of the Admiralty.

The bill being agreed to *nem. dis.*

The Duke of *Bedford* one more offered himself to the attention of their lordships. His grace declared, that in order to allow the bill to pass without any farther discussion, he had not made any reply to the charge brought against him by the noble secretary. He had indeed, heard it buzzed about by the dependents on ministers, that he had been the cause of these calamities, but the charge was at length for-

mally avowed by the noble lord himself. He would therefore appeal to the candour of the House, whether he had not, on the occasion alluded to, spoken with as much caution, as the delicacy of the subject could possibly admit? He would maintain that, in the proceeding censured by the noble secretary, he had done nothing but what his duty required of him. He had asked ministers, if they intended to bring the subject before parliament; and the answer which he received to that plain question, from one of his majesty's ministers was, that he had no plan to communicate to the House. He had no doubt but he could show most clearly that it was to that noble lord's answer, more than to any thing that fell from him, that a late calamity originated.

Debate on Mr. Whitbread's Motion of Censure on Mr. Pitt for his Conduct with respect to the Seamen.] May 10. Mr.*

* The following are the Official Papers relative to the important transactions which took place on board the fleet at Portsmouth :

PETITIONS OF THE SEAMEN.

To the Right Hon. and the Hon. Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses, in Parliament assembled. The humble Petition of the Seamen and Mariners on board his Majesty's Ships, in behalf of themselves,

Humbly sheweth ;

That your Petitioners relying on the candour and justice of your honourable House, make bold to lay their grievances before you, hoping, that when you reflect on them, you will please to give redress, as far as your wisdom shall deem necessary.

We beg leave to remind your August Assembly, that the act of parliament passed in the reign of king Charles the 2nd, wherein the wages of all seamen serving on board his majesty's fleet was settled, passed at a time when the necessaries of life, and slops of every denomination, were at least 30 per cent cheaper than at the present time, which enabled seamen and mariners to provide better for their families, than we can now do with one half advance.

We therefore request your honourable House will be so kind as to revise the act before-mentioned, and make such amendments therein, as will enable your petitioners and their families to live in the same comfortable manner as seamen and mariners did at that time.

Your petitioners, with all humility, laid their grievances before the honourable earl Howe, and flattered ourselves with the hopes that his lordship would have been an advocate for

Yorke rose for the purpose of conjuring Mr. Whitbread to postpone the discussion of the motion of which he had given notice the preceding day. It could lose nothing of its weight by being delayed for some time, and the country had already suffered so much from untimely discussion, that he thought the House should be extremely cautious how they entertained a debate upon a topic so delicate in its nature and so critical in its consequences. The country was in danger, and he called upon the House to endeavour to save it.

Mr. *Whitbread* said :—In proportion as the crisis is awful beyond example, and the calamities with which the country is threatened are alarming to an unheard-of extent, it is impossible for me not to feel on the present occasion an uncommon degree of pain and embarrassment. Before the solemn appeal and adjuration which the hon. gentleman addressed to this side of the House, and in particular to me, I

us, as we have been repeatedly under his command, and made the British flag ride triumphantly over that of our enemies. But to our great surprise, we find ourselves unprotected by him, who has seen so many instances of our intrepidity, in carrying the British flag into every part of the seas with victory and success.

We profess ourselves as loyal to our sovereign, and zealous in the defence of our country as the army and militia can be, and esteem ourselves equally entitled to his majesty's munificence, therefore with jealousy we behold their pay augmented, and their out-pensions of Chelsea-college increased to thirteen pounds per annum, while we remain neglected, and the out-pensioners of Greenwich have only seven pounds per annum.

We, your petitioners, therefore humbly implore that you would take these matters into consideration, and with your accustomed goodness and liberality, comply with the prayer of this petition, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

We, the delegates of the fleet, hereunto sign our names for the ships' companies :

Royal George—Valentine Joyce, John Morrice.

Queen Charlotte—Patrick Glynn, John Udleson.

Royal Sovereign—Joseph Green, John Richardson.

London—Alexander Harding, Wm. Ruly.

Glory—Patrick Dugan, John Bethell.

Duke—Michael Adams, W. Anderson.

Mars—Thomas Allen, James Blithe.

Marlborough—John Vassia, Wm. Senator.

Ramilies—Charles Berry, George Clear.

Robust—David Wilson, John Scrivener.

L'Impeteur—John Witna, William Porter.

experienced these sensations, and they must now be considerably increased when I find it impossible, consistently with the duty I owe to my country, not to proceed in bringing on the motion of which I have given notice, in deference to him or any

Defence—Geo. Galaway, James Barerick.
Terrible—Mark Turner, George Salked.
La Pompé—William Potts, James Melvin.
Minotaur—Dennis Lawley, G. Crosland.
Defiance—John Saunders, J. Husband.

To the Right Hon. the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

My Lords: We, the seamen of his majesty's navy, take the liberty of addressing your lordships, in an humble Petition, showing the many hardships and oppressions we have laboured under for many years, and which we hope your lordships will redress as soon as possible: we flatter ourselves that your lordships, together with the nation in general, will acknowledge our worth and good services, both in the American war, as well as the present; for which good service your lordships' petitioners do unanimously agree in opinion, that their worth to the nation, and laborious industry in defence of their country, deserve some better encouragement than that we meet with at present, or from any we have experienced.

We, your petitioners, do not boast of our good services for any other purpose than that of putting you and the nation in mind of the respect due to us, nor do we ever intend to deviate from our former character; so far from any thing of that kind, or that an Englishman or men should turn their coats: we likewise agree in opinion, that we should suffer double the hardships we have hitherto experienced before we would suffer the Crown of England to be in the least imposed upon by that of any other power in the world; we therefore beg leave to inform your lordships of the grievances which we at present labour under.

We, your humble petitioners, rely that your lordships will take into early consideration the grievances of which we complain, and do not in the least doubt but your lordships will comply with our desires, which are every way reasonable.

The first grievance which we have to complain of is, that our wages are too low, and ought to be raised, that we might be the better able to support our wives and families in a manner comfortable, and whom we are in duty bound to support as far as our wages will allow, which we trust will be looked into by your lordships and the honourable House of Commons in parliament assembled.

We, your petitioners, beg that your lordships will take into consideration the grievances of which we complain, and now lay before you;

class of men with whom I may differ in opinion. It is procrastination which has brought us into the dreadful situation in which we are now placed, and there is nothing which I regret more than not having moved a vote of censure upon the minister

1. That our provisions be raised to the weight of sixteen ounces to the pound, and of a better quality, and that our measures may be the same as those used in the commercial trade of this country.

2. That your petitioners request your honours will be pleased to observe there should be no flour served while we are in harbour, in any port whatever, under the command of the British flag; and also, that there might be granted a sufficient quantity of vegetables of such kind as may be the most plentiful in the ports to which we go; which we grievously complain, and lay under the want of.

3. That your lordships will be pleased seriously to look into the state of the sick on board his majesty's ships, that they may be better attended to, and that they may have the use of such necessaries as are allowed for them in time of their sickness, and that these necessaries be not on any account embezzled.

4. That your lordships will be so kind as to look into this affair, which is no wise unreasonable, and that we may be looked upon as a number of men standing in defence of our country, and that we may in some wise have grant and opportunity to taste the sweets of liberty on shore, when in any harbour, and when we have completed the duty of our ship, after our return from sea; and that no man may encroach upon his liberty, there shall be a boundary limited, and those trespassing any farther, without a written order from the commanding officer, shall be punished according to the rules of the navy, which is a natural request, and congenial to the heart of man, and certainly to us, that you make the boast of being the guardians of the land.

5. That if any man is wounded in action, his pay be continued until he is cured, and discharged; and if any ship has any real grievances to complain of, we hope your lordships will readily redress them, as far as is in your power, to prevent any disturbances.

It is also unanimously agreed by the fleet, that from this day no grievances shall be received, in order to convince the nation at large, that we know when to cease to ask, as well as to begin, and that we ask nothing but what is moderate, and may be granted without detriment to the nation, or injury to the service.

Given on board the Queen Charlotte, by the Delegates of the Fleet, this 18th day of April, 1797.

(Signed by the same names as the Petition to the House of Commons.)

that day on which the estimates were taken into consideration, for his culpable negligence in not having carried the measures proposed into effect with greater celerity. I regret, I say, that on that day a vote of censure was not passed upon his conduct, which might have accompanied the other vote to Portsmouth, for the purpose of convincing the seamen that the House of Commons had not been a party

in that delay to which all the subsequent calamities are to be attributed. That they have arisen solely from that cause is a proposition which I think I shall be able to substantiate from authentic documents, and if I am able to make good this proposition, if the House do not pass a vote of censure upon the author of that delay, we shall as grossly neglect our duty as he has neglected his. I know there are those,

ANSWER TO THE PETITIONS.

By the Commissioners for executing the Office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain and Ireland, &c.

Having taken into consideration the Petitions transmitted by your lordship, from the crews of his majesty's ships under your command, and having the strongest desire to attend to all complaints of the seamen in his majesty's navy, and to grant them every just and reasonable redress, and having considered the difference of the price of the necessaries of life, at this and at that period when the pay of seamen was established, we do hereby require and direct your lordship to take the speediest method of communicating to the fleet;

That we have resolved to recommend it to his majesty, to propose to parliament to increase the wages of seamen in his majesty's navy in the following proportions, viz.

To add four shillings per month to the wages of petty officers and able seamen; three shillings per month to the wages of ordinary seamen, and two shillings per month to the wages of landmen.

That we have resolved, that seamen wounded in action shall be continued in pay until their wounds are healed, or until, being declared unserviceable, they shall receive a pension, or be received into the Royal Hospital at Greenwich, and that having a perfect confidence in the zeal, loyalty, and courage of all the seamen in the fleet, so generally expressed in their Petition, and in their earnest desire of serving their country, with that spirit which always so eminently distinguished British seamen, we have come to this resolution the more readily, that the seamen may have, as early as possible, an opportunity of showing their good dispositions, by returning to their duty, as it may be necessary that the fleet should speedily put to sea to meet the enemy of the country.

Given under our hands, at Portsmouth, the 18th day of April, 1797.

SPENCER,
ARDEN,
W. YOUNG.

To the Right Hon. Lord Bridport, K. B.
Admiral of the White, Commander
in Chief of a squadron of his Majesty's ships employed in the Channel service.

[VOL. XXXIII.]

THE SEAMEN'S REPLY.

We received your lordships' answer to our Petition; and, in order to convince your lordship and the nation in general of our moderation, beg leave to offer the following remarks to your consideration, viz.

That there never has existed but two orders of men in the navy—able and ordinary; therefore the distinction between ordinary and landmen is totally new. We therefore humbly propose to your lordships, that the old regulations be adhered to; that the wages of able seamen be raised to one shilling per day, and that of petty officers and the ordinary in the usual proportion; and, as a farther proof of our moderation, and that we are actuated by a true spirit of benevolence towards our brethren, the marines, who are not noticed in your lordships' answer, we humbly propose that their pay be augmented while serving on board, in the same proportion as ordinary seamen; this, we hope and trust, will be a convincing proof to your lordships that we are not actuated by a spirit of contradiction, but that we earnestly wish to put a speedy end to the present affair. We beg leave to state to your lordships, that the pensions from Greenwich College, which we earnestly wish to be raised to ten pounds per annum; and in order to maintain which, we humbly propose to your lordships, that every seaman employed in the merchant service, instead of sixpence per month, which they now pay, shall hereafter pay one shilling per month, which, we trust, will raise a fund fully adequate to the purpose; and as this, in time of peace, must be paid by your petitioners, we trust it will give a convincing proof of our disinterestedness and moderation. We would also recommend that this regulation be extended to the seamen in the service of the East-India Company, as we know by experience that there are few sailors employed by them but what have been in the royal navy, and we have seen them with our own eyes, after sickness or other accident has disabled them, without any hope of relief or support but from their former services in the navy.

As to provisions, that they be augmented to sixteen ounces to the pound of bread and meat, cheese, butter, and liquor in proportion, and of a better quality, and a sufficient quantity of vegetables, and that no flour be served with fresh beef. And we farther beg leave to

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perhaps a majority of this House, who differ with me respecting the origin of the recent insubordination of the fleet, and who will be ready to attribute any future mischief which may ensue, which God avert! to the discussion which I am now

inform your lordships, that it is unanimously agreed, that, until the grievances before stated are redressed, and an act of amendment passed, we are determined not to lift an anchor; and the grievances of particular ships must be redressed.

Given under our hands, the Delegates of the fleet, on board the Queen Charlotte, at Spithead, April 19, 1797.

Resolution entered into by the Board of Admiralty at Portsmouth on the 20th of April:

By the Commissioners for executing the Office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain and Ireland, &c.

Having taken into consideration a paper containing several representations from the seamen of his majesty's ships at Spithead, respecting an advance of their wages, and being desirous of granting them every request that can, with any degree of reason, be complied with, we have resolved to recommend it to his majesty, that an addition of five shillings and sixpence per month be made to the wages of petty officers and seamen belonging to his majesty, which will make the wages of able seamen one shilling per day, clear of all deductions; an addition of four shillings and sixpence per month to the wages of every ordinary seaman; and an addition of three shillings and sixpence to the wages of the landmen; and that none of the allowance made to the marines, when on shore, shall be stopped, on their being embarked on board any of his majesty's ships. We have also resolved, that all seamen, marines, and others, serving in his majesty's ships, shall have the full allowance of provisions, without any deductions, for leakage or waste; and that until proper steps can be taken for carrying this into effect, short-allowance money shall be paid to the men in lieu of the deduction heretofore made; and that all men wounded in action shall receive their full pay until their wounds shall be healed, or until, being declared incurable, they shall receive a pension from the chest at Chatham, or shall be admitted into the Royal Hospital at Greenwich. And your lordship is hereby required and directed to communicate this our determination to the captain of each of his majesty's ships under your orders, directing him to make it known to the ship's company under his command, and to inform them, that should they be insensible to the very liberal offers now made to them, and persist in their present disobedience, they must no longer expect to enjoy those benefits to which by their former

bringing before the House; but however high I may wish to stand in these gentlemen's opinions, I have a still stronger desire to stand high in my own. From what my duty, therefore, calls me to encounter, I shall not be deterred by the fear of any

good conduct they were entitled: that in such case, all the men now on board the fleet at Spithead shall be incapable of receiving any smart-money or pension from the chest of Chatham, or of being admitted at any time into the Royal Hospital at Greenwich; and that they must be answerable for the dreadful consequences which will necessarily attend their continuing to transgress the rules of the service in open violation of the laws of their country. On the other hand, he is to inform them, that we promise the most perfect forgiveness of all that has passed on this occasion to every ship's company, who, within one hour after the communication to them of the above-mentioned resolutions, shall return to their duty in every particular, and shall cease to hold farther intercourse with any men who continue in a state of disobedience and mutiny.

Given under our hands, at Portsmouth, the 20th of April, 1797.

SPENCER,
ARDEN,
W. YOUNG.

To the Right Hon. Lord Bridport, K. B.
Admiral of the White, Commander
in Chief of his Majesty's ships to be
employed in the Channel, Sound-
ings, &c.

By the Command of their Lordships,
WM. MARSDEN.

REPLY OF THE SEAMEN.

To the Right Hon. the Lords Commissioners
of the Admiralty.

We, the seamen and marines in and belonging to his majesty's fleet, now lying at Spithead, having received with the utmost satisfaction, and with hearts full of gratitude, the bountiful augmentation of pay and provisions, which your lordships have been pleased to signify shall take place in future in his majesty's royal navy, by your order, which has been read to us this morning, by the command of admiral lord Bridport:

Your lordships having thus generously taken the prayer of our several Petitions into your serious consideration, you have given satisfaction to every loyal and well-disposed seaman and marine belonging to his majesty's fleet; and, from the assurance which your lordships have given us respecting such other grievances as we thought right to lay before you, we are thoroughly convinced, should any real grievance or other cause of complaint arise in future, and the same be laid before your lordships in a regular manner, we are perfectly satisfied that your lordships will pay

animadversion which may be passed upon my conduct.

Having said this much by way of preface and apology, I proceed to a summary investigation of the ground of debate, in which I think I shall have no difficulty in being able to prove, that the first minister of the country has been highly criminal in suffering the delay which took place between the concessions which were made by the lords of the Admiralty to the

every attention to a number of brave men, who ever have, and ever will be, true and faithful to their king and country.

But we beg leave to remind your lordships, that it is a firm resolution, that until the flour in port be removed, the vegetables and pensions augmented, the grievances of private ships be redressed, an act passed, and his majesty's gracious pardon for the fleet now lying at Spithead be granted, that the fleet will not lift an anchor; and this is the total and final answer. —April 22.

By the KING—A PROCLAMATION,

For pardoning such Seamen and Marines of the squadron of his Majesty's Fleet, stationed at Spithead, as have been guilty of an act of Mutiny or Disobedience of Orders, or any Breach or Neglect of Duty, and who shall, upon Notification of such Proclamation on board their respective Ships, return to the regular and ordinary discharge of their Duty.

GEORGE R.

Upon report of the lords commissioners of the Admiralty of the proceedings of the seamen and marines of the squadron of our fleet stationed at Spithead, and of the measures taken by the said lords commissioners in consequence thereof; and, in order to manifest our desire to give due encouragement to all those who shall return to the regular and ordinary discharge of their duty, according to the rules and practice of the navy; we have thought fit, by the advice of our privy council, to issue this our royal proclamation, and do hereby promise our most gracious pardon to all seamen and marines serving on board the said squadron, who shall, upon notification hereof on board their respective ships, return to the regular and ordinary discharge of their duty: and we do hereby declare, that all such seamen and marines, so returning to their duty, shall be discharged and released from all prosecutions, imprisonments, and penalties, incurred by reason of any act of mutiny or disobedience of orders, or any breach or neglect of duty, previously committed by them, or any of them.

Given at our Court at Windsor, the 22nd day of April, 1797, and in the 37th year of our reign.—God save the King!

seamen, and the ratification of those concessions by parliament; and in this view of the subject the House will naturally perceive that the motion which I have to propose to them, is nothing less than a direct censure upon that right hon. gentleman. If I am asked, upon what grounds I ascribe the mischiefs which have arisen from this delay? I refer the House to the speech of the right hon. gentleman; in which, unsatisfactory as it was, he admitted that the delay had been an unfortunate circumstance, and that, had he foreseen the events which have happened, he might have acted with greater dispatch. Was it not an express article of the compact formed between the lords of the Admiralty and the seamen that the conditions upon which they stipulated were to be ratified by parliament? Was it not promised by the lords of the admiralty, that they would recommend the concessions which they had made, as far as they had power to make them, to parliament for its sanction? In consequence of the stipulation, and this promise, what were the seamen naturally led to expect? Certainly, that an immediate message would be sent by his majesty to his parliament, recommending the subject to their consideration. But was any message sent? No! nor has there been one to this day. This would have been the natural mode, one would have thought, that ministers would have adopted to carry the measures for which they were pledged into effect. But let us see how they actually did proceed. From the public papers, I find that the ratification of the articles of their stipulation with the lords of the Admiralty by parliament was required by the seamen before they were ordered to go to sea. This stipulation was concluded on the 23d of April. On the 26th it was laid before the privy council, and was not ratified by his majesty till the 3rd of May. And not even then a message was brought down to parliament, the estimate being delayed to be laid before them till Thursday last. It was not indeed laid before them even then, but there being no House on Thursday, he gave the minister credit for having them ready on that day, if the House had transacted business. If this, then was the case, was it not the least thing which that minister could do, to acknowledge his error, and to beg pardon of the House and country; and ought not the House, whose business it was to watch over the conduct of ministers to impose

censure upon him, who, by his gross incapacity, had brought the state into this unprecedented dilemma? The right hon. gentleman pleaded in his excuse, that it required some time to make out the estimate. But did it require all the time which elapsed from the 23rd of April to the 4th of May? If the right hon. gentleman were one of those scrupulous plodding statesmen who never deviated from the rules of office, or the forms of the constitution, such an excuse might be entertained; but for the right hon. gentleman, who has trampled upon all forms, who has set aside established customs and infringed every rule both of official and constitutional usage—for him to set up such an excuse is contemptible in the extreme. The House cannot have forgotten the dispatch exercised by the right hon. gentleman in carrying through measures when their object was, to infringe upon the liberties of the people. If they have, allow me to remind them of the celerity with which the bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act passed through the House on an occasion when he had conjured up an idle alarm for the purpose of depriving the people of their freedom. But when a mutiny is on board the fleet, when our last resource is at stake, and every thing most valuable to the country in danger, the routine of office must be observed, and delay must be persisted in till we are brought upon the verge of destruction.

I have stated that the seamen stipulated for a parliamentary ratification of the concessions made to them by the lords of the Admiralty; this ratification being delayed, and mischief ensuing, I am entitled to presume that the mischief was the consequence of the delay. I know that it has been attributed to a different cause; that it is said to have arisen from misrepresentation of what passed in the House of Peers; but even supposing that this was the real cause of the calamities with which we have been afflicted, would not that misrepresentation have been prevented by an earlier communication upon the subject to parliament? This account of the matter is only varying the light in which it is viewed; the source of the evil remains the same. I am happy to be informed by the news of this day, that in consequence of intelligence reaching Portsmouth of the vote which has been passed by this House, matters immediately assumed a more favourable aspect, and that, though the intelligence was prevent-

ed by the unfavourable state of the weather, from being known through the whole of the fleet, the crews of those ships who were made acquainted with it immediately returned to their duty. If it required any additional proof, this is another circumstance which I am entitled to claim in aid of my position, that the whole of the mischief has proceeded from the delay of his majesty's ministers in carrying their promises into execution. For, if the effect produced by the resolution of the House, is to restore tranquillity, what could be the cause of the mutiny, but the disappointment arising from that resolution not being passed at an earlier period? Indeed, the proofs are so clear, and the circumstances which I have enumerated, so conclusive, that I find it unnecessary to add any thing farther upon the subject. An inquiry into the origin and whole course of the transactions must be instituted at a future period, and I trust, that if it shall be found that any part of them was owing to the misconduct of any member or members of the administration, that they will be brought to that condign punishment which they so justly deserve. I may, perhaps, be taxed with warmth, and it may be that I have been excited to a greater degree of heat than was becoming in one preferring an accusation, but I cannot help feeling some degree of indignation, when I find that to all the other instances of incapacity, of profusion, and of a dereliction of every honourable and worthy principle, by which their administration has been marked, they have added this new calamity of magnitude unascertained, and consequences incalculable. I shall conclude with moving, "That the right hon. William Pitt having so long delayed presenting to this House, an Estimate of the sum necessary to defray the expense for the Increase of Pay of the Seamen and Marines of his majesty's fleet, and for the proposed issue of full Allowance of Provisions, has been guilty of a gross Neglect of his Duty, and deserves the Censure of this House."

Mr. Fox having seconded the motion,

Mr. Pitt rose. He said he felt some degree of difficulty in taking notice of the hon. gentleman's motion. He did not desire that any degree of blame might be transferred from him to any other person, if blame was at all imputable; but he thought it necessary to state to the House, that it had been no part of his official duty either to present any estimate

to the House, to prepare any estimate, or to give directions for it to be made out. There was no part of all the financial departments in which the hon. gentleman could succeed so little in any charge he might bring forward against him, as in the motion he had just made; nor any one of them which could so little apply to him. The whole of the estimate was directed to be made out by the order of council, and to be presented to the House. The several stages through which this business must have gone, took up considerable time. For these reasons he was afraid that there was an inaccuracy in the hon. gentleman's motion, as particularly applied to him; but at the same time he wished it to be understood, that, on the general question, as far as related to the country at large, he laid no claim to any excuse in consequence of his having had no share in those transactions. As to the facts connected with the present question, he, on a former day, had stated to the House all that appeared to him to be material; and the question before the House was, whether there were grounds to believe that government ought to have been possessed of the opinion, that unless they had used considerable dispatch, those consequences which since had happened would have been produced? And, in such a state of the question, he would ask, whether there were sufficient grounds to induce the House to pass a vote of censure against him for not thinking that a delay would have caused those effects? The real state of the fact was this: on the 24th, and not on the 23rd of April, accounts arrived in town that the seamen of the fleet had all returned to their duty. On the 26th, a memorial was presented to his majesty in council, which was referred to a committee, whose report on the same was approved of by the council on the next day, it being that day when the council ordinarily met. On Thursday last he had given notice to the House that the estimate would be presented on the following day, which was prevented from being done until Monday. At the time, then, when the estimate was presented, and at all the periods of intermediate explanation, there was incontestible evidence of its having been the uniform intention of ministers to complete the engagements that had been made to the seamen. He would farther add, that none of the unhappy circumstances alluded to had taken place at the time that ministers had so

manifested their intentions. It had been argued, that delay alone was the cause of these events; but he thought it would be fair to observe, that they must have been also in a great degree produced by the misrepresentations of discussions that had taken place in another House. If those discussions had not been provoked in that place by persons who generally opposed his majesty's government, there would have been no misrepresentations of the tendency of those declarations which had been made by persons high in office; there would have remained no doubt but that at the moment when those discussions took place in another House, the final order in council would have been referred to a committee of the House of Commons, and an estimate made out, without any relation whatever to the causes which had produced the late events. But, unfortunately, an accident had prevented that from taking place on the Thursday already alluded to: and at the same time, an industrious and studied misrepresentation had gone abroad. As to the sincerity of the intention of his majesty's government, he could scarcely condescend to make a reply to those who should express a doubt about it. The greatest enemies of government could not for a moment suppose that any voluntary delay had taken place on the part of ministers. Must not their interest, as well as their duty, oblige them to be as expeditious as possible in carrying into effect the demands of the seamen? From the first moment that intelligence had been received of the transactions on board the fleet, and that the board of Admiralty had recommended it to his majesty to adopt regulations on the subject, government was earnestly employed in the means of carrying them into execution.—With regard to the present situation of the fleet, as far as the latest intelligence he had received would permit him to judge, he entertained the greatest hopes of the seamen having a disposition to return to their duty. But, from the difficulty of communication to the different ships, owing to the badness of the weather, he had not the means of obtaining the fullest information on the subject. He had, however, ground for hope, that tranquillity and order was effectually restored. He trusted, there was sufficient reason to induce the House to avoid any discussions on the subject, and that they would feel convinced that ministers had done every thing in their power.

Mr. *Whitbread* said, that, in consequence of an objection having been made to the form of his motion, he would beg leave to amend it, and, instead of "the right hon. William Pitt," to insert "his majesty's ministers."

Mr. *Pitt* hoped the House would not suppose that he wished to waive any thing that might be personal against himself. His objection to the motion went only to its irregularity. But he would ask whether it could be more regular to state in a lump "his majesty's ministers?" As to any thing that affected himself, he was perfectly indifferent.

The Speaker suggested the propriety of Mr. *Pitt's* withdrawing himself from the House while the motion was read from the chair. Upon which Mr. *Pitt* withdrew. Mr. *Fox* proposed to add to the motion, the words—"or causing to be presented," which was adopted. Then the amended motion was read from the chair as follows: "That his majesty's ministers having so long delayed presenting, or causing to be presented to this House, an estimate of the sum necessary to defray the expense for the increase of pay of seamen and marines of his majesty's fleet, and for the proposed issue of full allowance of provisions, have been guilty of a gross neglect of their duty, and deserve the censure of this House." After this Mr. *Pitt* returned into the House.

Mr. *Rose, jun.* said, that in the few observations he had to offer, he was biassed by no wish to screen a man, or any set of men, from that just censure, which, upon mature investigation, they might be found to deserve. He could not, however, too earnestly deprecate all hasty and intemperate discussion; and it appeared evident to him, that if the motion was deferred to some future opportunity, it might then be brought forward with more weight, as it would, by that delay, be freed from the passion and warmth which, in the present situation of affairs, might be introduced during the consideration of it. A decision arising from temperance and coolness would produce the greatest benefit; while a contrary conduct might lead the country to entertain an idea, that gentlemen only wished for objects of mutual crimination and reproach. If, therefore, the hon. gentleman agreed to defer his motion for ten days or a fortnight, it would come before the House in a more satisfactory manner. He reminded the House of the conduct of the Romans

after the battle of Cannæ, who, instead of expressing their despair at so melancholy a reverse of fortune, unanimously concurred in thanking their consul, Terrentius Varro, for not despairing of the safety of the republic. The conduct of the Carthaginians would have been very different; instead of giving vigour to the public spirit, they would have punished their unfortunate general in the severest manner, and have exclaimed, "Nihil supplicii recusandum foret." He wished the House to pause before they entertained a motion of this nature, under the present circumstances of the country.

Mr. *Martin* said, that no man lamented what had happened more than he did, but he did not see any reason why ministers should be censured on this occasion. They might have acted wrong, but there was no evidence of their having done so intentionally, and therefore he could not vote for a censure on them. It was their interest to have acted right, and he trusted they intended to do so. The minister was formerly asked by gentlemen opposite, when he intended to bring the matter forward; but no gentleman suggested to him that there would be imminent danger from delay. These were his reasons for not supporting the present motion.

Sir *W. Geary* opposed the motion, on the principle, that it ought to have been brought forward on clear and specific grounds of criminality. It was directed against a right hon. gentleman, though, according to the admission of the mover himself it might equally apply to any other of his majesty's ministers. As to the ratification of parliament having been insisted on by the seamen, that statement could not be founded in fact; since the fleet had dropped down to St. Helen's for the purpose of proceeding to sea, though no such ratification had taken place.

Mr. *Yorke* confessed that, much as he had wished that the subject should be postponed, yet, now that he had heard the arguments which had been urged in its support, he saw no reason for postponing the decision upon it. The motion, after having undergone so many amendments, was a proof, that the mind of the hon. mover was not made up on the subject. The gentlemen opposite blamed ministers for what had happened. Was that a candid mode of proceeding? That event might have taken place from a combination

of circumstances; and could any man fairly say that the conduct of ministers was the cause of it? He lamented the warmth of Mr. Fox, who had spoken upon this matter on a former occasion, in a manner that he should never forget. Even that right hon. gentleman said nothing at first of the necessity of an act of parliament, nor had he expressed any apprehension of a fresh mutiny; there was no appearance of it; so far from that, when his majesty's gracious pardon went down on the 28th of April, the fleet under lord Bridport, wanted to sail, and if the wind had been easterly, they would at this moment have been blocking up the harbour of Brest. The accidents of misrepresentation had produced alarming consequences, but from all that had happened, there was no evidence of any criminality in ministers.

Mr. Fox said:—I never in my life was more convinced of the propriety of a motion than I am of that which is now before the House. The chancellor of the exchequer appeared to my hon. friend to be chiefly guilty; but seeing that there were no documents to prove that the guilt attached exclusively to him, the censure is proposed to be voted against ministers at large, as being concerned in that delay which occasioned the disasters which have happened to the fleet. With regard to the propriety of this, I wish those who oppose it would state specifically the mischief which it will do: hitherto they have only talked of that mischief in general terms. Public discussion is the best security for public welfare, and for the safety of every good government. That energy which is to be had from secrecy stands upon the authority of but a few, and they have neither been the wisest nor the best, but those who, from age to age, have endeavoured to enslave mankind. I say this generally. But to come to the subject now before us, and to apply these general principles to the facts that have appeared. When this mutiny first broke out, was the subject debated in this House? No. It was passed by in silence; and those gentlemen who are so enamoured with secrecy had the complete advantage of it, as much so as could have been desired by any absolute government; for however we may deplore what has happened, and may wish that better measures had been adopted, yet still it must be allowed that ministers have had all the advantage of the secrecy for which they

are such advocates. But there are now charges exhibited against me. I am accused of not having at first stated the danger of the delay of which I now complain. I beg the House to consider this charge. Had I at first stated that I apprehended that would happen which has actually happened, would not gentlemen on the other side have said, that every prediction of mine had had a considerable share in causing the event? Mark the impregnable defence of the minister. Here if you state your opinion of the necessity of expeditious measures, and the danger of delay, you are said by your statement to cause the mischief which might have been avoided if you had remained silent. But, having remained silent, you are told that you have no right to complain in consequence of what has happened, for that you yourself did not foresee it, because you did not express your apprehension of danger. Let us now apply to facts. The news of the discontents in the fleet arrived in London on the Monday morning. I happened to arrive in the afternoon of the same day. Uninformed as I then was, I thought that we should have before us the transactions with all possible speed. In answer to a question, I was told that communication would be made with all possible speed. Should not I have been a caviller to have said more at that time? In a few days I did state that it appeared to me to be important that some measure should be speedily taken.—The whole of the question divides itself into two parts; first, Whether there was any cause for extraordinary expedition in providing a remedy for the evil? for, if there was not, the whole of my hon. friend's motion falls at once. Ministers have contended this, and have acted as if they thought there was no cause for extraordinary expedition; in which they differ, I believe, from every man in the country. I contend that if, contrary to the specific facts, there had not happened any mischief, still delay was criminal; because it was highly probable delay would occasion mischief. They should have taken the moment of peace and tranquillity at Portsmouth to satisfy the seamen. They must have been ridiculously sanguine if they expected that the seamen were not likely to be alarmed at the delay which took place. It has been said, that we have not proved that the evil we complain of was owing exclusively to the delay of ministers. It

is true we have no documents to this effect, but the fact is notorious. I ask what is the cause of our being in a state of comparative rejoicing this day? Is it not to the measures which have taken place in parliament? Certainly it is. Why, then, I ask if the case be so, is not that a proof that the want of these measures was the cause of the evil? This I state without entering into the question whether the representations are true or false to any certain extent. Ministers say that the evils are owing to misrepresentations of what happened in another place. Here let us pause. Take it for granted, for the sake of the argument, and for that only, that there have been gross misrepresentations. Does any man believe there is a difficulty in finding out the remedy for such gross misrepresentation? Expedition on the part of ministers was the only remedy. Had they done their duty by bringing forward the act of parliament, the effects of misrepresentation would have been comparatively innocent. It is supposed that persons of great authority said in another place, they did not know they should have any orders from his majesty to make any communication. That we all know in parliament to be correct in point of form, considering the place in which it was spoken, because it is in this House that the measure must originate. This is another signal instance of the folly of ministers, for they must know what effect this would have on the uninformed. The minister talks of misrepresentation, and the effect of it. Was he ignorant of that effect? He who caused the Habeas Corpus act to be suspended, must surely be aware of the possibility of there being Jacobins, as he has called them, in this country, who would be ready to misrepresent his intentions. I think there are not in this country a sufficient number of such persons to make us shake in our determination to adhere to the constitution, but although I do not think there are enough to do that, yet I think there may be enough to distribute a hand-bill. This he must know as well as any man. Then I ask, was he not criminally guilty in neglecting to do that which would render vain all such attempts? There is another view in which this important question may be considered. I am not going to give any opinion on the negotiation between the delegates of the fleet and the Admiralty, at Portsmouth; but that measure having taken place, it ought to be consi-

dered as a negotiation in which there were certain stipulations. No man can be satisfied in a negotiation until the stipulations of it are performed. Why, then, I ask, if it was not essential for the public benefit, that this negotiation should be made as short as possible? Has that been done? If you tell me this was only a promise, that time must be taken to perform it, and that the seamen ought to have been satisfied that it would be fulfilled, I answer, that a promise is, in its nature, an incomplete act, and the longer you are in performing it, the more reason do you give for doubting your sincerity. Delay, therefore, upon this occasion, considering all the circumstances, amounts to guilt on the part of ministers. But it is said, ministers were sincere. I never doubted it. I never thought of making any accusation against them that they did not intend to make good their promise to the seamen. What I complain of is, that they delayed the performance of that promise unnecessarily; in consequence of which some of the best blood of this country has been spilt. Then comes the general answer, "Ministers cannot be guilty of any crime upon this occasion; what interest have they in being so?" I know not what interest any men can have in guilt. I know not what interests any ministers can have in being bad ministers; and yet we know that men have been guilty, and that ministers have been bad ministers; that they have appeared in this world, and I am afraid will continue to appear, and unless there is some controlling power exercised over them, they will continue to do as they have done—much mischief to mankind. I say that ministers have discovered an incapacity which renders them quite unfit to manage the affairs of this country, and which they will ruin unless this House interposes its authority. Will any gentleman opposite deny this? That ministers have heaped upon this country misfortune upon misfortune, that they have committed blunder upon blunder, and that they have very nearly accomplished the ruin of this country? There are disasters and disgraces which, after a long succession, destroy the faculties of the human mind. I take that to be the case of the minister. He is, to use a vulgar expression, "beat blind." That is now his only excuse, his only apology. Who but a man who had been so disgraced, could have been blind to the consequences of the delay of which he

has been guilty upon this occasion? I know I am accused of speaking with too much warmth upon many subjects; all I can say in answer to that charge is, that I feel for the situation of this country with warmth, and I speak from feelings, of which I think no man ought to be ashamed. Look at what has been done in point of fact in this business. I stated formerly, that on the 25rd of April a letter arrived from Portsmouth. The minister states it to be the 24th. He states, that in one day the memorial was made for the lords of the Admiralty, and here the minister is correct literally rather than substantially, because the news was known early in the morning: but it was not presented till the 26th, and the order in council was not issued until the 3rd of May. Here is a delay of seven days upon points of form which did not require the delay of as many hours. The delay in all is full fourteen days. Reflect on the circumstances that have happened, and then say whether or no you think that delay criminal? But, it seems, this was all matter of chance; for the fleet might have sailed before the last disturbance took place, had it met with a fair wind. Suppose this be granted; then I ask, ought not ministers to provide against chances? Had they done so, they might have converted into a blessing that interposition of Providence which, under other circumstances, would have been considered as a disadvantage, by retarding the operations of the fleet. By this the evils would have been avoided, and the sailors completely satisfied. But if they had sailed, they would have sailed without having been satisfied; and what would have been the effect of insinuations to them of your insincerity in that situation, I will not dwell upon. I do not know how far this business may be said even now to be settled. We ought to know, what has been granted of what was asked, and what denied. The public have a right to know these facts, because on them depends the question of our future security. We should, therefore, show our vigilance, by marking the conduct of ministers with our censure.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, that the transaction which had given rise to the present discussion, was one which had given the most poignant concern to his majesty's ministers; but though they deeply regretted that it should have happened, yet that regret was not mixed with any

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remorse on their own account. Notwithstanding what might be insinuated to the contrary, no man breathing had reason to doubt, that when the fleet dropped down to St. Helen's, the mutiny was completely over, and the seamen satisfied with the concessions which had been made to them. Was it fair then to argue, that ministers ought to have suspected that would happen which no man in the kingdom could possibly foresee? If the right hon. gentleman really thought there was so much danger in what he called an extraordinary delay, though he might not be inclined to hold communication with his majesty's ministers upon every occasion, he could not think it would have been very improper for him to have given them a hint of what he knew or what he suspected. It was plain the right hon. gentleman did not do this because he thought the danger was over. The right hon. gentleman had said that there were alarms in the country of the danger of a French party, and he had added that as ministers were convinced that this party did exist in the country, they ought to have been on their guard, lest they should again sow the seeds of discontent on board the fleet. He believed there were many persons of that description in the country; but as he had been often blamed for stating that there were any such persons in the kingdom, he could not help being surprised that ministers should now be accused of not guarding sufficiently against them. He was ready to confess, that he had experienced great satisfaction from a conviction that the seamen were not infected with Jacobinism. In the moments of the greatest exasperation they had declared, that they would not suffer the Crown of England to be imposed upon, nor the glory of the British fleet to be tarnished. He firmly believed, if any attempt had been made to detach them from those principles of loyalty which had always distinguished British seamen, they would not have yielded to any such attempt. He believed even now, that they would regard all attempts of that kind with indignation; but no attack of that kind had then been made upon them. Some persons, however, for whom he could not find a name sufficiently descriptive of their wickedness, soon sought to mislead them. The moment the question of the seamen's pay and provisions were settled, and his majesty's most gracious pardon granted to them, these persons

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endeavoured to persuade them that the pardon was a forgery. When misrepresentations on what had passed on this subject in another place had been circulated abroad, their mode of attack was changed. The seamen were then told, that parliament meant to betray them. Before this malicious falsehood, was circulated amongst them, they had entertained no jealousy, because there was no ground for it. But did the right hon. gentleman mean to say, that some such event as that which had unhappily occurred, might not have taken place if the business had been brought before parliament sooner? Was the right hon. gentleman certain that the same diabolical tongues would not have invented some other story, calculated to promote that confusion which they desired? It must, however, give the greatest satisfaction to the House to learn, that when the resolution voted on Monday last was sent down to Portsmouth, favourable symptoms of a return to duty appeared among the seamen. This was the natural consequence of their discovering that they had been imposed upon; and he trusted that this disposition would continue, and that all differences would be finally adjusted when they should learn that the House had so completely fulfilled all that had been promised to them. It could not, however, be denied, that the seamen were satisfied with the grants of the Admiralty. The greatest proof of their satisfaction was, that they immediately acted upon it, by returning to their duty. It was therefore in vain to argue that the second mutiny was occasioned by any neglect of administration. No man could tell whether that unhappy affair might not have happened under very different circumstances; at the same time he was ready to allow, that if any suggestion had been made to his majesty's ministers, of danger to be apprehended from delaying the measure so often alluded to, they deserved censure; but in fact, this danger never entered into the imagination of any man. Under all these circumstances he was convinced the House would not agree to the motion.

Mr. Curwen wished to know whether the seamen had demanded more than was granted to them by the Admiralty? If they had demanded more than was granted to them, and any disaffection remained on that occasion, ministers could not have been too expeditious in ratifying all that had been stipulated they should obtain. Any delay in this case certainly deserved the

censure of the House. On the other hand, if every thing the seamen had demanded was granted to them by the Admiralty, he was ready to admit that ministers might suppose there was no reason to apprehend that new discontents would arise in consequence of the business not having been laid before parliament. If he could be convinced the latter was the real situation of the case, he should think himself bound to vote against the motion.

Mr. Pitt said, that more was at one time demanded by the seamen, than that upon the granting of which they returned to their duty.

Lord George Cavendish said, that nobody could have more respect than he for the noble lord at the head of the Admiralty, and he believed that no blame attached to him in the present instance; but there was certainly a criminal neglect in ministers not fulfilling the stipulations which had been made by the board of Admiralty at Portsmouth:

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. Whitbread - - - }	63
	{ Mr. Curwen - - - }	
NOES	{ Mr. Charles Yorke - - - }	237
	{ Mr. Wallace - - - }	

So it passed in the negative.

Debate on the Duke of Bedford's Motion relative to the Advances made by the Bank to Government.] May 15. The Duke of Bedford reminded their lordships that they were this day summoned to take into consideration the Report of the Secret Committee * on the Order of Council of the 26th of February last, prohibiting the Bank from paying their notes in specie. It became incumbent upon their lordships to take that report into consideration, and to found some resolutions upon it, as their committee had not drawn any conclusion from the evidence laid before them. As he was the person who had moved for the appointment of that committee, he considered it his duty to propose these resolutions; for if their lordships did not express a decided disapprobation of the conduct which government had pursued they would implicate the character of that House, and of the nation. When he first read the order of council ascribing the drain of cash from

* For a Copy of the Report, see p. 449.

the Bank, which rendered it necessary to prohibit the payment of their notes in specie, to an unfounded alarm of invasion, he much doubted the truth of the allegation. For if an unexpected run upon the Bank had been occasioned to that extent by the alarm of invasion, it appeared strange to him that that run had not taken place at the opening of the session, when danger of invasion was so strongly inculcated upon the minds of the people; but if he was lead to doubt of the truth of the allegation when the order of council first appeared, those doubts were confirmed when he found that the committee appointed by ballot to inquire into the causes which produced it, was composed not only of the zealous supporters of ministers, but of members of that very cabinet upon whose conduct they were appointed to decide. When he found this mockery of inquiry carried into practice in a case where, if the measure which was to be investigated was pronounced to have been injurious and impolitic, the authors of it would have been impeached; and when he recollected the various instances of incapacity and duplicity by which the present administration was marked, he conceived that the real cause of the order in council was very different from the pretended one. Impressed with these sentiments, he had thought it his duty to move for another committee, with more extended powers. This ministers did not think proper to deny; but the committee was composed, as before, of their own supporters. He scarcely supposed that a committee so formed was likely to bring to light the true causes which produced the order in council. But on this point he was fortunately disappointed; the committee having had to examine men of the first respectability, all of whom coincided in sentiment, and having had to inspect written documents which left not a shadow of doubt respecting the inferences which ought to be drawn from them. He was disposed to doubt the truth of the matter contained in the order of council from the beginning. Those doubts had been confirmed by the investigation of the committee. Mr. Giles had stated, that he had made frequent representations, in the capacity of governor of the Bank, to the chancellor of the exchequer, all of which tended to persuade him of the danger to the Bank from the diminution of its specie, in consequence of foreign remittances and advances to government. Mr. Raikes

stated, that he had had conferences with the chancellor of the exchequer, as deputy governor of the Bank, in which representations were made to him on the subject of foreign loans, or remittances; and on the danger of continuing the advances made by the Bank to government. Mr. Bosanquet stated, that if the advances of the Bank to government had been paid off, or greatly diminished, it would have enabled the Bank to regulate at their discretion the amount of their notes in circulation, and would have diminished the necessity for issuing the order of council; he concluded from the answers of the chancellor of the exchequer, that no doubt could be entertained that he was fully aware of the apprehensions of the bank directors, arising from the frequent advances which were made to government, and that by persisting in the same line of conduct contrary to their remonstrances, he rushed into the danger which they foresaw, and against which he was warned.—He next called the attention of their lordships to a paper annexed to the Report, intituled a Summary of the Chief Points which had occurred to the Committee in the course of their inquiry. How this paper came to be called a summary he knew not! for no one who read it could consider it as conveying the substance of that report. This paper abounded in gross misrepresentations of the truth, in shameful attempts to conceal what ought to be known to the House, and in assertions which were not warranted by fact. It began by stating the amount of circulation in the kingdom: this opened a wide field, and whether it was necessary for the committee to enter into it he could not pretend to say; but if an account was to be given of the circulation, it should have been given accurately. As it was contended, however, in this paper, that the difficulties of the Bank were owing in some degree to a scarcity of circulating medium, it was not surprising that they endeavoured to keep part of the means of circulation in the back ground. Hence it was denied that bills of exchange were applicable to the purposes of circulation. "Inland bills of exchange" (say the authors of this paper) "are thought by many to be a part of the circulation of the kingdom. They are not strictly so in the same sense as the two sorts of paper before mentioned, namely, notes of the Bank of England, and bills of country bankers." That bills of exchange could not answer all the purposes of cash, was

pretty notorious; but he referred to Mr. Thornton's evidence upon the subject: "In calling bills of exchange a means of circulation, I do not consider them as equally so with coin and notes payable on demand, since they ostensibly serve the purpose of ascertaining debts between buyer and seller, and of pledging the acceptor to a punctual payment, and are often created chiefly with that view, and are used but sparingly and occasionally as a means of circulation. I conceive that the number of bills of exchange, which may happen at any time to exist, bears no necessary proportion to the magnitude of the existing trade, although I conceive that the use of them in payment does bear a pretty regular proportion to the quantity of commerce. For instance, at Liverpool and Manchester, all payments are made either in coin or in bills of exchange." Now when he considered that bills of exchange were the chief means of circulation in these two great manufacturing towns, and that they bore a regular proportion to the quantity of commerce, he could hardly agree with the opinion advanced in the paper, that they were not a part of the circulation of the kingdom, strictly so understood.—Among the various causes which had produced the scarcity of cash in the Bank, was one which he thought was scarcely worth the attention of that House, and which he should not have supposed the committee could have gravely stated, namely the diminished number of bills of inclosure since the war. There was bound up in the report, a comparative statement of the number of bills of inclosure before and since the commencement of the war, from which it appeared that they had increased very considerably since the war began. They would find, however, that the same thing happened during the American war in pretty nearly the same proportion; the only inference, therefore, that could be drawn was, that it was one of the consequences of the war; which the committee would have seen, had they called for the account for the last twenty instead of the last nine years.—He came now to a subject of a much more serious nature. He had said before, that things were stated as facts in this paper which were not warranted by the evidence given in the report. How to account for the gross misstatement which he was about to mention, he was utterly at a loss. In p. 252, they found that all the remittances made for

the services of the war in the West Indies, on the continent of Europe, in Corsica, and other distant parts of the world, amounted during the four last years to 33,510,779*l.*; that the sums expended on the European continent, distinguished from those expended in other distant parts of the world, during the said four years, including the imperial loan, and the advances made to the Emperor, amounted to 14,988,422*l.*; and, lastly, that the sums paid for all sorts of military services on the continent, during the war ended in 1763, amounted to 20,626,997*l.* He had to remark, in the first place, upon this statement, that if the authors of the Report meant to compare the expenses of the present war on the continent with those of the war ending in 1763, the number of years ought to have been marked, and then their lordships would have found that there had been expended in the four years of the present war almost as much as had been expended in eight years of the former war; for it is to be recollected that there is one million to be deducted from the 20,000,000*l.* of expense incurred in the war of 1763, for the winding up of the accounts which still remain as a charge to be defrayed at the conclusion of the present war. This was not all. In the account of our continental expenses during the present war, the sums advanced to the Emperor are said to be included. It so happened, however, that the account was accurate only by leaving out the words "including the imperial loan and the advances made to the Emperor." These sums appeared in the title, but were excluded from the body of the account, so that in fact there was an error in the total sum of 5,500,000*l.* He left it to their lordships to decide whether the error originated in intention or in ignorance; but to one or other of these causes it must be imputed.—The next point to which he called the attention of the House, was the state of our exports and imports. He reminded their lordships, that in the last years of the American war, the excess of the exports above the imports of the country were averaged at 6,000,000*l.* As this excess was a natural concomitant in war, he cautioned the House how they acceded to the inference that was drawn from it. The additional expense of naval stores, is stated to have rendered the balance of commerce less favourable to the country. But it ought to have been mentioned, that this very

circumstance increased the excess of our exports over our imports. The shock which public credit had sustained on the present occasion was compared to the state of the country in 1763, when a similar shock was felt, occasioned by the extension of commerce, immediately upon the return of peace. But he would ask, whether the country was in the same circumstances now as it was then, and whether a calamity befalling us in time of war could be ascribed to the same cause with a difficulty springing from the conclusion of a peace? In the summary now before them, he was surprised to find the most material parts of the evidence entirely omitted, namely, the correspondence which took place between the chancellor of the exchequer and the directors of the Bank upon the danger which would result from his persevering in making remittances to foreign powers, and their continuing to make advances to government. To the evidence upon this subject the authors of the summary merely refer, without attempting to give the substance of it. It would have been difficult, indeed, to have given a summary of these conferences and this correspondence; for it is impossible to expunge one sentence they contain without expunging a charge against the minister. It was to this part of the report, however, to which he begged leave to call the particular attention of the House, as it was upon this branch of it that he meant to found his resolutions. In the summary of the report Mr. Ellison is represented as ascribing the stoppage of the Newcastle banks to a local alarm, similar to that in 1793. Now, it was to be observed, that Mr. Ellison, in his evidence, represented the alarm of 1793 as originating in the stoppage of the banks; so that if the present alarm was similar to that of 1793, it was the effect, and not the cause of the shock that public credit had sustained. In his grace's opinion, that shock had been produced, not by alarms, but by a combination of different causes, many of which had existed for some time back. Upon this part of the subject he regretted that some papers, containing statements of the quantity of cash in the Bank at different periods, which were laid before the committee, had not been published in their Report. He could have shown from them that the statements contained in the Report were false. In the report the cash of the Bank was said to be higher in June than in March, and

the greatest drain was represented to have taken place in March and June. But these papers would have proved, that a very serious drain commenced as early as June 1795; though the committee did not state it as commencing till September in that year.—His grace next adverted to the evidence of Mr. Thornton and Mr. Boyd. Without calling into question their veracity, he doubted the truth of their speculative opinions: the more so, as he found that they doubted the truth of them themselves. He found Mr. Boyd dealing in opinions, which were much in vogue in France at the beginning of the revolution, and which at that time were reprobated by ministers as leading to inevitable ruin. The substance of Mr. Boyd's and Mr. Thornton's opinions was, that the difficulties which the commercial world had experienced, and the shock which public credit had sustained, arose from the Bank not extending their discounts. To the theories of these gentlemen he opposed the sentiments of Mr. Adam Smith. Here he again had to complain of the authors of the Report for endeavouring to mislead. One would naturally conclude from the Report, that the facts it contained related to the state of the country at the time the order of council was issued, as there was nothing upon the face of the Report to excite a suspicion that it was otherways. He thought it his duty to state, however, that the facts there recorded, related not to the time at which the order of council was issued, but to the period at which the witnesses were examined. The reduction of the paper in circulation amounted to only one-eighth from the quantity afloat in 1795: but even supposing that the decrease had been greater, he could not perceive how a decrease of notes could produce a decrease of cash, though he could easily perceive that a decrease of cash might produce a decrease of notes. Mr. Thornton said, that it was the same thing to the mercantile world whether advances were made by the Bank to the merchants or to government; and that it was only from a superficial view of things that the merchants formed a different conclusion. His grace, for one, was willing to partake in the error of the merchants; for if he wanted money to carry on his trade, he conceived it would be very little comfort to him to be told that the Bank were about to lend a million to government. He found also that these gentlemen con-

tradicted their own opinion in what they afterwards advanced respecting the unwillingness of private bankers to discount the bills of individuals when money was at a high rate of interest. He found also, that the chancellor of the exchequer, if ever he had been a convert to their opinion, had now abandoned it; since he was for repaying the Bank the advances they had made to government, with a view, no doubt, to relieve it from its present difficulties. This measure was an acknowledgment that the repayment of these advances at an earlier period would have averted the calamities which have recently befallen it; for it was not to be supposed that any measure could retrieve it when ruined which would not have saved it from ruin, if adopted in time. The only part of the Report which it remained for him to notice, was that toward the conclusion, respecting alarm. So convinced were the committee, that the necessity which produced the order of council had nothing to do with alarm as its cause, that they never mention it to the conclusion of the Report. Indeed it would not have been perfectly consonant with the theory which runs through that Report, to have ascribed the evil to alarm as its cause: for however much an ill-grounded alarm might tend to remove cash from circulation, it could not narrow the circulation of bank notes, which the theorists described as the only evil in existence. The noble duke then proceeded to state the substance of the resolutions which he meant to propose, founded upon the correspondence which had taken place between the bank directors and the chancellor of the exchequer; the tendency of which, on the part of the Bank, was, to procure repayment of the advances made by them to government, stating also the danger which might result to the Bank from government persisting in its demand for new advances, without discharging any part of its past arrears: and on the part of the chancellor of the exchequer to procure new advances from the Bank, by holding out to them promises of repayment which were no sooner made than violated. His grace went through the different parts of this correspondence, commenting upon the resolutions of the bank directors, and the answers made to them by the chancellor of the exchequer. He particularly adverted to the resolution of the court of directors of the 11th of February, 1796, and Mr. Pitt's answer to

it of that date, in which he positively promises not to make any farther loan or advance to the Emperor, without previously consulting the Bank, while at that very moment he was sending money abroad for the service of his imperial majesty, without the authority of parliament. On the 30th of July a resolution was passed by the court of directors, reminding the chancellor of the exchequer of his former and repeated promise to reduce their advances as speedily as possible, and determining for the future to refuse payment of all treasury bills beyond the sum of 500,000*l*. Although that was about the time fixed for the meeting of parliament, the minister persisted in concealing from the public the real state of their finances. And when parliament was convened, instead of plainly communicating to the legislature the pecuniary embarrassments of the country, he put into the mouth of his majesty an expression of satisfaction that the temporary embarrassments which had been felt were no longer in existence, and that the extent and solidity of the resources of the nation had triumphed over all the difficulties to which, for a period, they had been subjected. It was curious also to remark the excuses which were made by the chancellor of the exchequer for the violation of his engagement: he first forgets his promise; then those under him do not obey his orders; a third time he is obliged to go to Cambridge; and last of all the Bank gave him too short notice. With respect to the conduct of the bank directors, his grace thought them culpable in not laying before the legislature the means which the chancellor of the exchequer took to procure money from them. They had done every thing, however, which, according to their conceptions, they could do with propriety. The noble duke concluded by appealing to their lordships, as the persons who were to decide, whether they should pass a censure upon the unprincipled and corrupt conduct of ministers, or whether they should attempt to screen them from the just condemnation which awaited them. If they did not show by their vote that a weak and incapable administration, after violating every principle of rectitude, and outraging the rights of the people, could not escape the just punishment of their crimes, by holding out the rewards of corruption as a bribe for the purchase of indemnity, they would be participating in their guilt, and would

eventually share in their disgrace. If they passed a vote of censure upon the ruinous and destructive plans which ministers had been pursuing, the support which they had hitherto given them might be imputed to error; but if they persisted in lending support in defiance of the plainest proofs of criminality, error would no longer be recurred to as a plea of defence. He called upon them to show the country and the world, whether they had one spark of British spirit in their bosoms; whether they were virtuous enough to acknowledge their faults, and brave enough to shake off the fetters of corruption. He invoked them to show that they had their children and their posterity in their contemplation, and that they were not regardless of every thing beyond the passing hour. He was aware that he might be accused of overstepping the bounds of moderation; but when he reflected on the character of the present administration, those despoilers of our fortunes, those oppressors of the poor, those plunderers of the rich,—when he saw some of the greatest and most powerful individuals in the kingdom, become the despicable agents, or venal partisans of a corrupt and desperate faction, he could not boast cold-blooded patience—he had no claim to apathy. If they thought that they could restrain public opinion by chains and fetters, they were miserably mistaken. They might attempt to stop the current of the tide, but he warned them that a boisterous wind might arise which would drive it beyond its banks, and deluge all around. They were called upon by the imperious voice of awful and threatening events to rouse from their supineness, to awake from their torpid state of lethargy. He trusted that there were none in that House who distrusted the loyalty of the people of this country; but he reminded them that Englishmen were born to be free, and must be free. If the government, therefore, wished to preserve its authority, it must be by reigning not over the will, but in the hearts of the nation. His grace set down, having moved the first of the following Resolutions:

1. “That it appears to this House that subsequent to June 1795, and during the year 1796, a great diminution was experienced in the specie of the Bank of England.

2. “That the governor and deputy governor of the Bank did, at various periods, represent to the chancellor of the exchequer the danger to the Bank, from the diminution of its specie.

3. “That during these periods the directors of the Bank frequently remonstrated with the chancellor of the exchequer on the magnitude of their advances to government, anxiously requiring payment, or a considerable reduction of the same; but that nevertheless the chancellor of the exchequer not only neglected to comply with the object of those remonstrances, but usually, under pretence of the necessity of the public service, renewed his demands for farther aid; and that under the exigency of the case, as stated to them by the chancellor of the exchequer, the directors of the Bank were, from time to time, induced to consent to farther accommodation.

4. “That the chancellor of the exchequer frequently solicited such farther accommodation in the most anxious and pressing terms; declaring, that it was impossible to avoid the most serious embarrassments to the public service, unless the bank directors afforded the assistance he required.

5. “That although by these means the directors of the Bank were induced to comply with his demands, they generally expressed their reluctance in strong language; and that they at last, that is to say, on the 28th of July 1796, thought it necessary for their own justification, to request the chancellor of the exchequer to lay before his majesty’s cabinet, their most serious and solemn remonstrance; in which they declare, that ‘sensible of the alarming and dangerous state of public credit, nothing could induce them to comply with the demand then made upon them, but the dread that this refusal might be productive of a greater evil.’

6. “That during the above period, a considerable portion of the Bank advances was occasioned by payments of bills of exchange drawn on the treasury from abroad.

7. “That it had seldom been the custom of the Bank of England to advance, on the account of such bills, more than from 20,000*l.* to 30,000*l.*; and that even during the American war, such bills never exceeded at any one time the sum of 150,000*l.*, the wisdom of our ancestors having foreseen and provided against the mischief of similar advances, by a clause in an act passed in the 5th year of William and Mary, by which the governor and company of the Bank of England were restrained from advancing any sums of money, other than on such funds on which a credit is granted by parliament.

8. “That from and after the year 1793, at which time an act of parliament passed, containing a clause, by which the directors of the Bank are indemnified for the advances they had made on bills drawn from abroad, and exempted in future from the penalties of the said act of William and Mary respecting such advances to government, the amount of Treasury bills paid at the Bank continued progressively to increase; and that between the 1st of January 1795, and the 25th of February, 1797, sums to the amount of upwards of

15,000,000*l.* were at different periods advanced to government upon this head.

9. "That the directors of the Bank did, at various times during the years 1795, 1796 and 1797, apply to the chancellor of the exchequer for repayment of such advances, and represent to him the ruinous consequences to themselves and to the public, of continuing the system of making Treasury bills payable at the Bank; and that they even declared they conceived it to be 'an unconstitutional mode of raising money, and what they were not warranted by their charter to consent to.'

10. "That the chancellor of the exchequer did, at various times in that period, undertake to reduce the advances on that head within the sum of 500,000*l.*, and likewise so to arrange his payments as to put an end to the account, but that nevertheless the said promises never were kept by him. and that the advances on treasury bills, on the 28th of February, 1797, amounted to 1,619,049*l.*

11. "That foreign remittances to a much larger amount than ever were known in the most expensive wars in which this country has been involved, have taken place since the year 1793.

12. "That the extent of such remittances occasioned, at so early a period as the end of the year 1794, and the beginning of the year 1795, great alarm in the minds of the directors, which they at various periods communicated to the chancellor of the exchequer; and that on the 3d of December, 1795, the court of directors, under the apprehension that it was intended to grant a farther loan to the Emperor, came to a resolution, by which they declared their unanimous opinion, that should such a loan take place it would be most fatal in its consequences to the Bank of England. That they communicated such resolution to the chancellor of the exchequer, who assured them he should lay aside all thoughts of it, unless the situation of things relative to the Bank should so alter as to render such a loan of no importance or inconvenience to them.

13. "That on the 5th of Feb. 1796, the chancellor of the exchequer, after stating, in conversation with the governor and deputations from the Bank of England, his opinion of the necessity of farther assisting the Emperor, promised to take no step in that business without previously communicating to them his intention.

14. "That on the 11th Feb. 1796, the directors of the Bank passed unanimously the following resolution: 'That it is the opinion of this court, founded upon the experience of the effects of the late imperial loan, that if any farther loan, or advance of money, to the Emperor, or to any other foreign state, should, in the present state of affairs, take place, it will in all probability prove fatal to the Bank of England. The court of directors, therefore, do most earnestly deprecate

' the adoption of any such measure, and they solemnly protest against any responsibility for the calamitous consequences that may follow thereupon.'

"To which resolution, when communicated to him, the chancellor of the exchequer returned for answer, 'That after the repeated intimations which he had given to the governor &c. of the Bank, that no farther loan to the Emperor would be resolved on without previous communication with the Bank, he did not see any reason for these resolutions, that he did suppose they were adopted in a moment of alarm, and that he should consider them in that light.'

15th. "That both from the general tenor of the said answer, and from its particular reference to the substance and matter of the resolution then communicated to him, he gave the governor, &c. of the Bank to understand that he was bound by promise to them, to negotiate no loan for the service of his imperial majesty, nor to make any remittance either to his said imperial majesty, or any foreign prince, under any pretences whatever, without previously communicating such his intention to the Bank of England; that the directors so understood him; and, that, impressed with that belief, they abstained from making any farther remonstrance on this subject.

16. "That nevertheless the chancellor of the exchequer, for some time prior to February 11, 1796, clandestinely remitted, and did for several months subsequent, clandestinely remit, to his said imperial majesty, and other foreign princes, large sums of money, in defiance of his repeated promises, and in violation of his solemn engagement with the Bank of England, and consequent upon their resolution of the 11th of February.

17. "That it appears that if the said advances of the Bank to government had been paid off when required, or considerably reduced, the Bank would have been enabled to reduce, if expedient, the amount of its outstanding notes; and that such option would have been of essential service to its interests.

18. "That it appears, from the evidence of the governor and deputy-governor of the Bank, that if the said advances had been paid off when required, or considerably reduced, the Bank would have been enabled to give more extended aid to the mercantile interest of Great Britain, in the way of discount.

19. That it appears, that if the advances on the treasury bills had been paid off when required, and as the chancellor of the exchequer had promised, and the foreign remittances abstained from, as the chancellor of the exchequer had likewise promised, there would have existed no necessity for suspending the due and ordinary course of the Bank payments in cash.

20. "That it appears to this House, upon an attentive examination of the evidence reported by the secret committee, upon a minute

perusal of the correspondence between the governor and directors of the Bank of England and the chancellor of the exchequer, during the years 1795, 1796, and 1797, and after a thorough review of the whole circumstances of the case, that the neglect of the chancellor of the exchequer in discharging, or sufficiently diminishing, the amount of the sums advanced to government by the Bank of England; his perseverance in directing treasury bills of exchange to an amount unexampled to be paid at the Bank; his frequent promises, and constant breach of those promises, to reduce their amount within the sum of 500,000*l.*; and the enormous amount of his remittances to foreign princes in loans and subsidies, were the principal and leading causes which produced the necessity for suspending the due and ordinary course of the Bank payments in cash."

The first Resolution being put,

The Earl of *Liverpool* hoped to be able to satisfy their lordships that they ought not to agree to the resolution. With regard to the constitution of the committee, it was necessary and proper that they should have before them every thing connected with its investigation. As to the conduct of it, could any charge be advanced? Was ever any question refused? Was ever any demand for accounts negatived? Never was the conduct of a committee more candid and impartial. The noble duke said, that a great part of his charge was directed personally against the chancellor of the exchequer; yet this culprit had been examined upon oath before the committee—the first instance, in which a party accused was desired to give evidence against himself. With regard to the Summary alluded to, nothing could be expressed with greater candour. That the diminution of Bank notes, according to the noble duke's position, would increase the quantity of specie, was absurd; that it might decrease the demand for them, was the only view in which the observation was intelligible.—But to come to the charges which had been made against the chancellor of the exchequer. And to elucidate what he had to say on that point, his lordship desired the clerk might read the minutes of the court of directors in 1795, the answers of the chancellor of the exchequer on the imperial loan in 1795 and 1796, the resolutions of the committee of treasury, dated Feb. 11, 1796, and the chancellor of the exchequer's farther answer. As to the effect of the advances to the Emperor, it appeared, from the Report, that the Bank had, at different times made application to the chancellor of the exchequer, stating

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the danger which they apprehended from the continuance of foreign remittances. A direct answer was given to the two first, stating, that no imperial loan should be brought forward. To the third application, which mentioned both loan and advances, the answer contained information that there was to be no loan; but it never was to be considered as implying an engagement beyond what it expressed. Certainly no such engagement was thought to be incurred by the chancellor of the exchequer himself. Mr. Raikes, and others, did not understand this to be an engagement to make no advances. Consequently there was no room for the charge of breach of faith which was urged upon this point.—The noble duke was inaccurate in the facts which he stated as the consequences of this measure. No bills drawn for these advances were received till July, yet the rate of exchange from October that year, till March following, rose considerably in our favour. Mr. Giles too, admitted that the advances, conducted as they were, could not produce any material effect. The great question, however, was this:—Did the loan and advances to the Emperor produce the effect of disabling the Bank to continue its cash payments? Compare the sums sent to the continent this war, with the sums sent thither in the four last years of the war, ending in 1763. It appeared from the Report that 14,988,000*l.* had been remitted to the continent during this war: during the other period alluded to there were 15 millions. Could this country afford to do this thirty years ago? and in its present situation could the effects of the same measure be so disastrous? There was no reason to believe that a remittance to double the amount which had taken place during this war would have been attended with such effects. It was proved, that the balance of trade was, for the last four years, at an average of ten millions a year. The whole remittances out of the country had been 33 millions, the whole balance for the same four years of the war had been 42 millions. Was it possible, then, that the stoppage of the Bank could be ascribed to the effect of the imperial remittances? To employ the enemies armies abroad for the security of this country, had ever been considered our true policy by the greatest ministers who had guided the affairs of this country. Had the chancellor of the exchequer, in the present state of the country, any reason

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to apprehend danger from pursuing the same measures of policy? Certainly not. With regard to the effect of the advances by the Bank to government, in the first place, a very considerable sum had been stated as advances by the Bank which, in fact, did not belong to them, but was the amount of unclaimed dividends which had been taken for the public service. But the advances to government were by no means unprecedented in their amount. In 1780, they were 10,900,000*l.*, somewhat higher than in 1797; in 1793, they were only 100,000*l.* less. The Bank, too, must be able to make advances, in proportion to the general prosperity of commerce and extent of wealth. Our commerce was nearly double what it was in 1782 and 1783. Was it possible, then, that this advance could produce effects so serious as to suspend the cash payments of the Bank? A great part of the cause to which the stoppage and consequent distress were to be ascribed was, the increased demand for discounts, arising from a part of the law which he thought required to be altered. It was the 12th of queen Anne, which prohibited discounts done at more than 5 per cent. The consequences were obvious. In time of peace, when money could be obtained for less than 5 per cent, people were willing to lay out their capital in discounts. In times of embarrassment, however, more could be made by other speculations, and in these such capitals were then employed. This necessarily occasioned a great demand for discounts; and when 12 per cent. could be made of the money which by discounts produced only five per cent, the temptation to employ it in this manner could easily be conceived. He had conversed with the late lord Mansfield upon this subject, who entirely disapproved of the law of the 12th of queen Anne. Indeed, he saw no reason why money, like every other commodity, should not be allowed to find its own level and its own price. At Hamburgh, the advantages of unrestrained transactions upon this head were greatly felt. To the bad effect of the limitation upon the head of usury in this country, he was inclined to ascribe the situation in which the Bank had been placed, and the depreciation which government securities experienced. This evil was likewise to be imputed, in a great measure, to alarm. Country bank notes were the chief circulation in the country,

and these, in the moment of alarm, produced a run upon the Bank of England, the reservoir of the cash of the kingdom. What the effect of alarm would be it was easy to conceive. The public circulation of the kingdom was about 34 millions; and it was not to be expected that cash to the amount of 11 millions, the amount of bank notes, was constantly to be kept. Under an alarm, therefore, produced by a demand for cash upon the scale of a very extended paper circulation, it must be impossible that cash could be obtained to answer the general demand. He recollected the effects which, in different instances, such alarms had produced in 1764, in consequence of great bankruptcies at Amsterdam, Hamburgh, &c. the failure of the Ayr bank, and the difficulties of the country banks in 1792. Three of the instances that occurred to him happened in times of profound peace. This alarm, then, was to be considered, in a considerable degree, as the cause of the difficulties of the Bank for specie. To impute it to the effect of the gradual advances made to the Emperor upon the immense circulation of this country, was altogether absurd. The great capital lately laid out in canals, inclosures, and other improvements, proved at once the extent of the commerce and wealth of the country, and showed how such operations might in times of embarrassment, press upon the general circulation of the country, and increase the difficulty which was before experienced. For the reasons he had stated, he should move the previous question.

Lord *Hay* said, that much of the mischief that had of late befallen us had originated from our unexampled prosperity, which had induced a spirit of enterprise and speculation unknown to former times. This spirit had increased daily since the peace of 1783; and when, by any sudden accident, those speculations were destroyed, it produced effects such as we had beheld.

The Earl of *Guilford* said, that whatever might be the necessity of continuing the order in council, he doubted the necessity of originally issuing it. He thought that the Bank might have been enabled to go on; or, if obliged at last to stop, it would have been better that it had shown to the public, that its stoppage arose from its own want of cash, instead of its being proved that this event arose from the wants of the government. The Bank

directors had expressly declared, that the imperial loan had produced the scarcity of their cash, and the chancellor of the exchequer had no reason to distrust their authority. The advances had effected the rate of exchange, and from experience of the past, there was every reason to apprehend the bad effects of such drains. The Bank had repeatedly demanded of government repayment of their advances. It was one of the resources to which they trusted for extricating themselves from their embarrassment. They had been deceived by the chancellor of the exchequer. Had his promises been kept, they would have been enabled to go on. That the loan and advances to the Emperor and to government, were the causes of the stoppage of the Bank, could scarcely be doubted.

Lord *Auckland* entreated the attention of the House to a few observations on the principal heads of crimination, which the noble duke had brought forward; and first, with respect to the Bank advances to government. The magnitude of those advances had been strongly reprehended: they had not however been greater than in some periods of the late war: they had not been secret; they had in every session been subject to parliamentary discussion. They had been occasioned by expenses frequently impossible to have been foreseen in the wide and complicated services of a war just and necessary; but at the same time highly difficult and dangerous. A fair and attentive perusal of the communications on this subject between the directors of the Bank and the chancellor of the exchequer would show, that there does not exist even a pretence to impute to the latter either duplicity of conduct, or ambiguity of language, or a culpable want of foresight. Still, however, the magnitude of the Bank advances was open to some doubts which might deserve consideration.

Are those advances an improvident mode of borrowing for the public service, provided that they can be furnished without occasioning a mischievous drain of cash from the Bank, or a prejudicial restriction of commercial discounts? The answer was obvious and indisputable. He would suppose the average amount of the Bank advances to be ten millions sterling. The interest payable will be 500,000*l.* a year. Let it next be supposed that a loan is created to pay off the whole. The charge of such a loan will not be less

than 6 per cent, or 600,000*l.* a year; to which must be added one per cent. more for the sinking fund: and thus taxes must be found and bought forwards to produce 700,000*l.* a year in the midst of the general pressure of the war; and in the war price of the funds, a capital of 20 millions must be given for the ten millions borrowed. It was superfluous to dwell farther on the detriment resulting to the public from such an operation.

Have the Bank advances to government contributed to the restriction of commercial discounts? He was willing to allow that in some degree they may have had that effect; but certainly in a small proportion to the amount of the advances, which are to be considered as a large discount made to one discounter, and thereby distributed through the general channels of circulation to bankers and to others, who must otherwise have been supplied by discounts immediately from the Bank. Mr. Henry Thornton, of whom and of whose evidence it was difficult to speak in terms of adequate respect, had explained that matter with great acuteness. Farther light had been thrown upon it, and upon the whole subject of discounts, by the very able and intelligent evidence of Mr. Boyd. In point of fact the discounts to the merchants were occasionally at the highest, when the advances to government were also at the highest. In one sense only can such advances be more inconvenient to the Bank than commercial discounts; the latter, whether in cash or by bills, are more immediately under the command of the Bank, being returnable at periods never exceeding 63 days.

Would the drain of cash, and the consequent failure at the Bank have been avoided, if the advances to government had been less? From the fullest conviction of his mind, he could decide that question in the negative. Some of the directors, indeed, seemed to maintain a different opinion; but their opinion was founded on the supposition of contracting the dealings of the Bank, and the issue and circulation of Bank-notes within limits, which (even by the avowal of those gentlemen) would have occasioned a general explosion and confusion in all the commercial interests and transactions. Thus Mr. Giles had stated that "In February, 1797, when the Bank-notes in circulation were (only) 8,500,000*l.*, if 3,500,000*l.* of the government advances had been paid off, the directors would have thought it

useful to reduce the bank-notes in circulation to 5,000,000*l.* rather than have risked the large drains of cash that ensued." He allowed at the same time, that "the quantity of bank notes in circulation at that period was lower than in many former periods of the last five years, owing to the drains of cash, and to the restrictions in discounts which the directors thought proper to make." He farther admitted, that "a restriction of the bank-notes in circulation to 5,000,000*l.* would have caused a convulsion and distress in the extensive commercial concerns of the kingdom." But he added that "of two evils, the directors would have taken the least." The evil to be incurred was the general convulsion of commerce (and of public credit): the evil to be avoided was the temporary embarrassment of the Bank. Lord Auckland was willing to believe that such expressions had been unguardedly used; they certainly seemed to imply, that it had been in contemplation to reduce the bank-notes in circulation to the paltry amount of 5,000,000*l.*; paltry certainly, when compared to the exigencies of this great and rich metropolis. It was the precise sum which, previous to the late troubles, the *caisse d'escompte* at Paris had kept in full circulation for the interior concerns of that city. The noble duke had seemed to approve these doctrines of Mr. Giles, and had adverted to positions of a similar kind, stated by Mr. Winthorp: "As an individual director," said that gentleman, "I have for the last two years constantly recommended the diminishing both our advances to government and our discounts, so as at all events (short of an universal run) to secure the safety of the Bank. I thought the Bank ought never to be in danger." It might be sufficient to oppose to such doctrines, the plain and convincing language of the present respectable governor of the Bank, Mr. Raikes. That gentleman on being asked by the committee, whether, if the repayment of advances had been made in the manner and at the time above mentioned, he would have advised the Bank to restrict their circulation of Bank notes to 5,000,000*l.* answered, "By no means; such a restriction was never in idea, nor could the circulation of the country do without such a sum."—And surely it would have been a criminal abuse of the monopoly enjoyed by the Bank, if the directors had restricted their dealings at the period

when the increased demands of commerce, of manufactures, of public improvements, of public credit, and of the state, were all calling for an extension of these dealings. Was it possible for the Bank, in such a moment, to have acted as an insulated selfish establishment, which is to take care of itself only, regardless of every consideration that may affect the rest of the kingdom? If in any respect such principles operated, as to discount, or notes in circulation, or advances on loans, they were, *pro tanto*, causes of the embarrassments which had taken place.

The next charge made by the noble duke related to a promise asserted to have been given by the chancellor of the exchequer to the Bank, not to make the remittances to the Emperor, which had taken place with some degree of secrecy in 1796. But surely the directors of the Bank had no right to call upon one of the king's ministers for a specific engagement, as to the use to be made of a sum given by a vote of credit in parliament for the purposes of the war. The directors would have strangely misapprehended their own duties if they had made any such attempt. What, then, were the facts? The directors intreat the chancellor of the exchequer to make no new loan to the Emperor. His answer was, that no new loan should be proposed without their being previously apprised of it. A month afterwards they again apply to him, not to propose any farther loan, "or to make advance of money to the Emperor." His answer was, that "no farther loan should be resolved on without previous communication with the Bank." Here, then, two requests are made to him: he gives an answer to the one, and preserves an entire silence as to the other. Nothing more is said as to the other request till five months afterwards; when the directors discover that private remittances were beginning to be made to the Emperor. The governor and deputy-governor state in their evidence, that they then mentioned their suspicion to the chancellor of the exchequer, who gave no answer, but by his countenance seemed to assent to it. They both agree, that if the remittances were necessary, it was beneficial to the public to make them secretly. And Mr. Raikes adds, that "He did not look upon it, that the chancellor of the exchequer thought himself obliged to consult the Bank on advances to foreign powers of 50 or 100,000*l.* at a time." Such was the

plain state of a transaction which is now represented as a scene of deceit and perfidy! It was not immaterial to add, that under the mode of remittance adopted, the exchanges rose in favour of this country, and continue to be in favour of it.—The noble duke quitting these specific charges, had indulged himself in some general remarks on the expenses of the war. The answer was obvious; but it would be a task at least superfluous, to recur to old demonstrations of the justice and necessity of the expensive struggle in which we are engaged. Declamations and unreasonable clamour on the truisms connected with loans and taxes, might be raised in corners; but the mind of the noble duke was surely much superior to such considerations. In the mean time, whatever may be the result of our several continental alliances, it is a subject of pride and of consolation, and will be honorable to the country in future history, to have maintained a generous and unshaken faith to our allies even to the last hour.

He would not attempt to develope the causes of the late drain of cash from the Bank; those causes are amply detailed in the report of the committee. The investigation had convinced him, that the national wealth is at present indisputably greater than it was at the commencement of the war. He wished to be understood as speaking of wealth, and not of money. the latter may be paper or metals, or any other substance, according to the common consent and convenience of the nations which employ it; but it is the circulating sign only of wealth, and is not wealth. With respect however to cash and bullion, he saw no reason to believe that there is less at this hour in the kingdom than there was four years ago. The evidence before the House would show, that the general demand for cash had increased, and must necessarily have produced a drain from the Bank. Alarms and other impressions had led the country banks to restrict their notes, and had induced individuals to make hoards of cash. In a kingdom so populous and so opulent as this, a general call for small sums will create a rapid demand to a great amount, and beyond the immediate power of the national bank, which is also a hoard; but with this distinction, it is an accessible hoard. From these considerations, from the particulars stated in the minutes of evidence, and from remarking the periods of the different drains of cash from the Bank, it was

a fact nearly capable of demonstration, that the coin of the kingdom had not been carried away. A reference to the table of exchanges would show to their lordships, that during the period from September 1792 to March 1793, cash and bullion could not be sent out of the kingdom without great loss to the exporter. It might be assumed, therefore, without fear of contradiction, that none was at that time sent out of the kingdom; and yet, during that period, the drain of cash from the Bank, occasioned by some alarms and some commercial difficulties, was greater than at any subsequent period. It would also appear from the table of exchanges, that from Feb. 1796 to Feb. 1797, when the drain of cash from the Bank prevailed with such alarming rapidity, the course of exchange was too high for the export of bullion; and in the latter part of the period, had been even high enough to bring it in. Having now established that the cash drawn from the Bank had not been sent out of the kingdom, but that it had been applied partly to the increased demands of commerce, manufactures, internal improvements, and the enlarged scale of general expense, and partly to the hoards of individuals, who had felt alarms and distrust, he wished their lordships to advert to the consolatory inference of the accumulating wealth of the kingdom, which had enabled us to supply all the foreign remittances for the purposes of the war, and yet at this hour to have the course of exchange more favourable than it was at the commencement of the war. The extraordinary remittances to foreign countries and to our distant settlements in the last four years, had not been less than ten millions annually, beyond what had been usual in a period of peace. On the other hand, it appeared from the evidence of Mr. Irving, that the balance derived from our commerce, and from our East and West India settlements and fisheries, had been considerably more than equal to the drain above stated. There is reason to believe, if we are true to ourselves, that our commerce will this year be more flourishing than ever. He was solicitous, that the country should know its own means and resources. A just confidence in those means and resources, with energy, order, and steadiness in the public conduct, could not fail to elevate us above all present difficulties, and to lead to the attainment of a secure and honourable peace.

The Duke of *Athol* said, that no blame was ascribable to the chancellor of the exchequer for his conduct with regard to the Bank, and that the necessity for issuing the order of council, arose from various unavoidable causes. He should vote for the previous question, and not for the noble duke's resolution which was a truism; He could not help expressing his feelings at the violent language of the noble duke in the conclusion of his speech, a sort of language which he was persuaded the noble duke in the moment of cool reflection, would himself admit to be highly improper. Was he to be termed a slave of corruption and venality, because he had entertained political opinions different from those of the noble duke? The noble duke would not have used such language in any other place.

Lord *Grenville* contended, that if the chancellor of the exchequer had given any assurance to the Bank, that no advances should be made to the Emperor without their previous concurrence, it would not have been what the noble duke had called it, the government taking the direction of the affairs of the Bank into their own hands, but it would have been a surrender of the functions of government into the hands of the Bank. Nothing so preposterous, however, was done. The chancellor of the exchequer might perhaps have overlooked the word "advances" in the application of the Bank, with respect to the knowledge of any new loan, and answered them generally, that he should communicate the matter to them without its being ever made a question that government should be restrained in private remittances to the Emperor; and accordingly Mr. Raikes said, that it was never meant of small sums to the amount of 50, or 100,000*l.* The whole of this evidence it was to be recollected, was made up of minutes of conversations made by the governor and directors; and he doubted whether a report of a gentleman's words, which had never been submitted to him, ought to be received as good and substantial evidence. There was no one fact to prove that the advances to the Emperor had either occasioned a run upon the Bank, affected the exchanges, or injured the credit of the country. The exchange had risen in our favour during the advances; and taking the public circulation at 34,000,000*l.* the private paper must be at least double that sum; so that to imagine that a remittance of between

900,000*l.* and 1,000,000*l.* could affect the country out of a circulation of 100,000,000*l.* was ridiculous. There was something so monstrous and extravagant in the proposition of a noble earl (*Guilford*), that the Bank should, by way of increasing their credit, on a given morning shut up their doors, and end their concerns, that he could not suppose he was serious in suggesting it; because it was evident that such an extraordinary step would end in the subversion of the government and the ruin of the country. The noble duke was, he believed, the first peer, who had ventured to attack the veracity of a report of a secret committee appointed from among themselves, and charge it with being drawn up with a view to conceal the truth to deceive and delude the House, and to screen the guilty from censure and punishment. His charges, however, recoiled upon himself. With regard to the gross invective and the extraordinary expression with which the noble duke had loaded the conclusion of his speech, he must tell the noble duke, that however fit such language might be for his audiences in Palace-yard and elsewhere, they were extremely unfit to be uttered before their lordships, or indeed in any other assembly of honourable men. It was not a new thing for the noble duke to assume it as an undeniable fact, that all the talents, all the judgment, all the truth, all the integrity, all the virtue, all the public spirit, and all the patriotism to be found in that House and in the House of Commons was confined to himself, the six or eight noble lords who acted with him, and about fifty or sixty gentlemen in the other House of Parliament, and that the majority of both Houses, and indeed the majority of the whole body of the people of England who supported the war, were devoid of all principle, actuated by motives that were base and mean, and the abject and venal slaves of his majesty's ministers.

The Duke of *Bedford* said, that possibly the noble secretary of state might think he had reproofed him severely, at least from his voice and manner he seemed to imagine so. The noble secretary was however mistaken. He had not felt it to be a severe reproof, and as long as he existed, he should hold it his duty to declare his sentiments on public matters with freedom, equally regardless of the noble secretary's reprehension, or his misrepresentation. The language he had held, and the terms he had applied, to the support

which ministers had received in that House and elsewhere, through the whole of their criminal and disastrous career, were dictated by an imperious sense of his duty. So far was he from conceiving that there was no virtue in parliament, that he thought there was a great deal both in that House, and in the House of Commons. There was a great deal of virtue in the people, as it was evident from their general disapprobation of the measures of his majesty's ministers.

The previous question was then put on each of the Resolutions, and carried in the negative.

Debate on Mr. Grey's Motion relative to the Advances made by the Bank to Government.] May 16. Mr. Grey said, that many considerations would have induced him to decline troubling the House with the proposition which he now rose to move, both of a personal nature, and because he had repeatedly seen the little interest with which the majority of the House received any proposition which came from those with whom they were not used to concur. In determining, however, to submit to the House the resolutions he was now about to move, he had yielded to the request of his friends, and to a sense of what his public duty imposed. Having been a member too, of the committee appointed to examine into the necessity and the causes of the order of council, and dissenting as he did on certain points from the majority of that committee, he felt himself called upon to explain the grounds upon which that difference of opinion was founded. He felt it to be a task which his public duty likewise imposed, to submit to the House resolutions of a criminatory nature against the chancellor of the exchequer, founded upon the proofs collected by the committee, and contained in their Report, and which amounted to a charge of guilt, and of misconduct which the House could not suffer to pass with impunity. He was aware that the duty of an accuser was always a painful and invidious one, and more especially was it unpleasant to those on whom the necessity was often imposed. In the line of conduct which he felt himself obliged to pursue, he was conscious he was actuated by no improper motives, and that he gratified no private views. Nothing but an imperious call of public duty could induce him to arraign, as he now did, the chancellor of the exchequer, of criminal misconduct, by which

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he had contributed to bring the Bank of England, and, along with it, public credit into that situation in which it was placed by the order of council. Before he proceeded to open the nature of his propositions, he would state the difference of opinion between him and, he believed, the whole of the committee. The object of its investigations comprehended two points the necessity of the order in council, and the causes by which it had been produced. It was upon the first point that the difference alluded to existed. He had thought that the order of council was neither proper nor necessary. This opinion was founded upon the closest observation of the state of the Bank, and a thorough conviction, that the interference of power was not the remedy by which its embarrassments could be obviated; that it tended to enhance the evil, and the difficulties of repairing it. The exact amount of the cash in the Bank had not been before the committee, but from the documents it possessed, it could be seen, that though the run upon the Bank had continued for another month in the same proportion, as during the same period before, the cash of the Bank would not have been so low as in the year 1783, when no application to government had been thought necessary; but when, even in the accelerated proportion of the last week preceding the order, and the two last days of that week, the cash of the Bank might have been sufficient for another week, and afforded room for employing expedients to procure farther supplies. His opinion of the mischievous tendency of the interference of government in the affairs of the Bank was so strong, that he could not subscribe to the opinion of the necessity for the order in council. The inconveniences which might have arisen from rejecting this expedient, were more easy to be repaired, than the fatal effects which arose from the principle of the interference of government to suspend the functions of the Bank. So much in explanation of his differing from the rest of the committee. The committee stated, that whatever might be the effects of other causes, whether progressive or likely to cease, the dread of invasion occasioned the drain which reduced the Bank to the necessity of suspending their money payments. What he imputed, however, as an article of serious charge against the chancellor of the exchequer was, that prior to this period the affairs of the Bank were so

reduced, that a drain, which in other circumstances would not have produced this effect, had, in this instance, occasioned the immediate necessity of stopping payment. Instead of taking measures to counteract this danger, the chancellor of the exchequer had accelerated the causes by which the event was ultimately produced. In support of this heavy charge, he called the attention of the House to the evidence on the table. At the end of 1794, and beginning of 1795, the Bank, feeling the bad effects of the drain by foreign remittances which they had already experienced, became seriously alarmed at the consequences which might ensue from a new loan to the Emperor, and they made strong representations to the chancellor of the exchequer on the subject upon the 15th of January 1795. In this representation they likewise stated the inconveniences they felt from the amount of their advances to government, especially upon treasury bills, a species of security new, at least in the extent to which it had been carried during the present administration. The chancellor of the exchequer thanked them for this communication and promised to reduce the amount of advances on treasury bills, but said that this could not be done till after the first payment on the loan. The mischief of advances on treasury bills had been felt by the Bank; they wished to be indemnified for the sums they had advanced contrary to their original constitution and to the wise regulations of the statute of king William. Instead of an indemnification, however, a clause repealing the whole of the existing limitation was introduced into a loan bill without notice, or without explanation. The sum to which the limitation was desired by the Bank was 500,000*l.* but instead of this, every restriction was removed by a clause, which in passing might have justified a charge of remissness against the House, did they not find an excuse in the extraordinary manner in which the business had been managed. It was important, however, to observe the period at which the representation of the Bank for repayment of their advances was made. It was a month before the chancellor of the exchequer had made his arrangements for bringing forward his budget, and when he had full time to settle every thing necessary to the accomplishment of the object which the Bank had solicited, and which he had promised to perform. On the 23d of February the budget was opened. The

chancellor of the exchequer, with the pompous parade of our resources, rested the hopes of success in the disastrous contest in which we are engaged, upon the rapid decay of the French finances. The arguments upon which he supported this conclusion, were drawn from statements of the cash and paper circulation in France and the ruin which the disproportion would produce. The cash at the utmost, he stated at 90 millions, and the paper at 130 millions. When such was the reasoning upon which he proceeded in viewing the state of our enemy, he was particularly bound to attend to our domestic situation. The representations of the Bank were before him. On the principles and arguments he then employed, it was more particularly his duty to have provided against evils which were held out to him, and which threatened ruin to public credit upon the very data, which with regard to France, he so strongly pressed. He did no such thing, however. Though in answer to the representation of the 15th of January, he had promised to pay off part of the advances due by government; by a new representation, on the 16th of April, he was reminded of his promise of payment from the first instalment of the new loan. What excuse then is he to make for this breach of faith? It was contained in his written answer to the last representation. He admits the propriety of the demand, but he says, "that in the multiplicity of business it was forgotten!" The chancellor of the exchequer, who boasted of more accurate estimates, and more complete provision for the public expense than any of his predecessors in office, quite omits an article of more than two millions, he neglects the demands of the Bank, he exposes to hazard the interests of the nation, and the excuse for all this is, that it was forgotten! He writes, that the demands of the Bank should be complied with out of hand, and that he should immediately give directions for partial payments to be made. The debt on treasury bills, however, continued to increase, and on the 5th of June 1795, the Bank represented that their debt on this head amounted to 1,210,000*l.* and on the 30th of July, they represent their determination to order their cashier to refuse payment of these bills when they exceeded a certain amount, but that they depended upon his promises to reduce its amount. In answer to this, the chancellor of the exchequer says, "that the warrants are nearly ready."

Though the Bank represented on the 30th of July, that the drain upon them was such as made it desirable for them to reduce their credits, they received a letter containing a new demand for advances on the consolidated fund. The Bank returned an answer, stating the inconveniences under which they laboured in consequence of these advances, and their determination to limit their amount, but agreeing to wait till November, on condition that measures should then be taken for their repayment. To this the chancellor of the exchequer returned an answer, stating, that he agreed to the conditions, and that he should take care they should be complied with. Notwithstanding this promise, the Bank are obliged on the 8th of October, to repeat their complaint, as the sums due to them were not discharged. They stated the drain in bullion and specie which had taken place, that the last advances had been made with great reluctance; and that if measures of caution were not pursued, the most fatal consequences were to be apprehended. They represented the loan to the Emperor as a drain which could not be sustained; and when, in answer, the chancellor of the exchequer said, he had no intention to bring forward an imperial loan, the intimation was received with the utmost satisfaction by the governor of the Bank, who said that if another took place it would go near to ruin them. The chancellor of the exchequer likewise added, that the bills from abroad would continue two months longer, and no more. Amidst repeated representations, renewed promises, and uniform breach of faith on the part of the chancellor of the exchequer, the meeting of parliament on the 29th October 1795 arrived. The Bank again state their alarms, and press for payment. In November they represent their fears from the drain which had taken place for foreign remittances, that they should be obliged to refuse any advances, even upon the vote of credit. To this the chancellor of the exchequer answered, that there was no intention of any imperial loan, and that he should abandon every consideration that was inconsistent with their security. On the 7th of December, the financial arrangements for the year were brought forward. Again the distresses of France are contrasted with our flourishing situation. Upon that occasion, the chancellor of the exchequer justly observed, that our prosperity rested upon a steady adherence to the financial principles which our ancestors had estab-

lished, and by accompanying the vigorous efforts we were bound to exert at present with salutary provisions for the future. Was not he bound then to make some provision for the demands of the Bank and for the security of our regular system of finance, which his neglect threatened to overthrow? He had failed in his former promises of payment: here again he had neglected to make any provision for the Bank. In consequence of another application, however, he informs the Bank that he should make a payment of a surplus to a certain extent, out of funds which he had destined for other purposes. Last year he had charged the chancellor of the exchequer with having diverted the grants of parliament in contempt of the act of appropriation; here, in answer to the Bank, he avowed his neglect in making provision, and his determination to discharge part of their advances from funds, which not he but parliament had destined for other services.—He now came to the period when a new loan was made, the main object of which was the payment of the advances made by the Bank. The reason then assigned for this measure was, that it would relieve circulation, and enable the Bank to enlarge their accommodation to commerce. From the evidence of Mr. Bosanquet it appeared, that part of the sums for the payment of which this money was granted, had not been paid off. The Bank were creditors suing for the payment of a debt due to them, and they did not wish to convert a floating debt into a permanent one. He was astonished when he heard it said, that the Bank, who had so earnestly solicited government for payment of their advances, did not avail themselves of the means of payment. The evidence of every other director examined, proved that they had pressed for payment of the very sum which he complained of as left undischarged; that the clause in the loan bill which had been quoted, had nothing to do with the subject, and that the solicitations of the Bank for payment of it still continued. Three budgets having elapsed without provision being made, the Bank had an interview with the chancellor of the exchequer on the 24th of May 1796, and found him impressed with the justice of their applications. On the 25th, he wrote them, that after the second payment on the loan of seven millions, their demands should be attended to, that he was obliged to be present at

the election at Cambridge, but would pay attention to their application on his return. On his return from Cambridge the Bank waited on him. Their advances were now as high as before, and they were urgent for payment. The chancellor of the exchequer assured them that something should be done, and coincided in opinion that the amount of their advances ought to be kept down; but as the anxiety which he expressed for keeping down this amount was uniformly followed by a fresh demand, this was immediately succeeded by an earnest request of new accommodation. The Bank remonstrated, and comply with reluctance, from a fear that their refusal would be attended with a greater evil. The situation of the Bank became still more critical. The chancellor of the exchequer had received such hints as must have sufficiently apprised him of that situation. Still their solicitations were neglected, his promises were broken, and the sum of their advances continued to increase till the fatal period when the order of council was issued. Amidst all the representations which he had received from the Bank, the chancellor of the exchequer continued to persevere in the very measures which accelerated the mischief. With regard to the effects of the drain occasioned by the imperial loan, the evidence upon the table was full of the remonstrances made by the Bank to the chancellor of the exchequer. On the 16th of February 1796, they represented, that a farther perseverance in foreign remittances would be fatal to the Bank. The chancellor of the exchequer assured them that no loan should be sent to the Emperor, unless circumstances materially altered. With this the Bank were satisfied, because they understood the assurance to extend to remittances of every kind. The representation to which this answer was made comprehended both loan and advances, and Mr. Bosanquet says, in his evidence, that the answer of the chancellor of the exchequer was disingenuous if it did not apply to both. If what passed at the conversation which took place on this subject was admitted, it was disgraceful in the chancellor of the exchequer to return so deceitful an answer. It was understood to apply to every kind of remittance; and if it was not so meant, it was not only disingenuous but fraudulent. What was the fact however? Colonel Crawford had, at this very time, drawn bills to the amount of

300,000*l.* and continued to draw, till the sum of advances was 1,000,000*l.* But if good faith be necessary to public dealings, will the House allow such flagrant breach of it to pass with impunity? If the measures of the minister materially contributed to the fatal event which public credit has felt so deeply, shall not the House rescue itself from the charge of being his accomplice, by punishing the person to whom the guilt is to be ascribed? That it did materially contribute to that event, he would contend. All the Bank directors agreed in stating, that if the advances to government had been discharged, the stoppage of the Bank might have been prevented. The Bank of England was a bank of circulation. To the support of such a character, it was essential that it should pay on demand. It, therefore, ought to be always prepared. If necessary, it must have cash to answer all its notes. Circulating medium was a fashionable phrase in the present times, and he was afraid that what was said to be a want of circulating medium was a want of capital. The amount of the exports was no proof of the flourishing state of the country. War necessarily created a demand for certain articles: the individual manufacturer was enriched, but the country received no return for what was sent abroad on this account. The national capital was not supplied and recruited by such exports they only enhanced ruin while they seem to indicate prosperity. Here Mr. Grey read a quotation from Smith's *Wealth of nations* in support of this doctrine. It was the opinion of Mr. Thornton and Mr. Boyd, that the Bank should have extended their discounts, and increased their paper. If an opinion of the latter gentleman was well founded, then had the bank committee greatly deceived the public in their first report. It was said by this gentleman, that the sums discounted by the Bank were not to be taken as debts of which they could compel payment, but that they were put into the situation, by fresh issues, still farther to accommodate the person who had bills in this situation. If so, could the sums which the Bank had discounted be taken as assets? Could a bill brought for discount by persons who should require fresh discount when it became due, be considered as a fair bill? He would appeal to Mr. Thornton whether such a bill would be taken? Such an opinion, however, was evidently erroneous; and to

proceed upon such principles no bank of circulation could ever exist. It was said, that increased commerce required increased discounts. Here Mr. Grey read another passage from Adam Smith, which laid it down, that discount was only safe and proper where the person discounted what he would otherwise have been obliged to keep by him. It was stated that the Bank, by not extending its discounts, had contributed to the stoppage which had taken place; but the whole facts in the evidence were repugnant to this conclusion. It appeared, that when the Bank narrowed their discounts, their cash increased, except where there were other drains. Neither did he agree in opinion that the reduction of country bank notes was owing to the diminution of Bank of England notes; for though the notes of the Bank of England had at certain periods been diminished, the proportion of country bank notes had remained as before. But, in point of fact, the declaration of the Bank that they were to contract had never been acted upon. For his own part, were he a director of the Bank, he would refuse to discount any bill to a holder of exchequer bills, and would tell him to carry them to market before he came to the Bank for accommodation. It was a dangerous position, that the conduct of the Bank of England ought to be guided by principles different from those which regulated the conduct of other banks. It had been justly observed by an hon. gentleman, (Mr. Wilberforce), that particular measures could be of little consequence, and that the restoration of general credit was the great point to be accomplished. But what was his definition of general credit? General credit must rest more upon the feelings of confidence than upon a demonstration of causes. It was an edifice reared by the hand of simplicity, upon the basis of truth. Men might discuss finely and talk speciously; but to obtain general credit you must produce belief, not inspire admiration. To extract belief of things above the reach of human judgment was the highest effort of divine power. But this claim was confined to revelation. Men might be overawed by power, but their confidence could not be compelled. A regard to simplicity, truth, and good faith, an experience of punctuality in the discharge of obligations incurred, could alone secure general credit. A bank note, Mr. Burke had well observed, was

all powerful upon the Royal Exchange, because in Westminster-hall it was impotent. To talk of any new circulating medium which commerce did not supply, was a dangerous chimera. To inspire general credit, we must tell the public that the Bank is to be conducted like other concerns, upon views of its own interest; that it is to be conducted by men who act as merchants, not as politicians and statesmen. Tell the public that the connexion of the Bank with government is to be dissolved—that its transactions are to be free—and you will inspire general confidence. The Bank of England, if it begins its operations upon the 24th of June, can only stand upon the principles of truth, honour, and fidelity in its engagements. In neglecting the means of saving the Bank from the necessity of stopping payment, the chancellor of the exchequer had been guilty of a culpable breach of duty. Admitting that the Bank was wrong in narrowing its discounts, was it not independent, and entitled to manage its own affairs? In not paying the advances which compelled them to such a conduct, the minister, by whose fault it was occasioned, was responsible for the consequences. Here, then, he submitted to the House the charge, and the evidence on which it rested. Though it was personally directed against the chancellor of the exchequer, he did not mean to select him from the rest of his colleagues, who were equally amenable to the justice of the country. However the talents of an individual might render him fitter to carry it into execution, yet the system was common. It was that system of unremitting malevolence, of obstinate perseverance in a pernicious policy, which had commenced with his majesty's reign, and which had pervaded every part of public administration. To this system it was owing that we had lost America: to this system was the present war to be ascribed: to this system was to be ascribed that determined hostility to the principles of freedom with which every public measure had been marked. Hence arose that rancour which, inflamed with the prospect of gratifying its detestable hopes, had in the moment of success neglected every opportunity of concluding peace; to this spirit, unchastised by misfortune, unenlightened by experience, was owing the desperate refusal to put an end to a war, which had brought us to a state of things

when he could no longer be sanguine that any man could make peace; when, least of all, it could be expected under the auspices of the present ministers. That system which lost us America ministers had carried into Ireland, and to all the distresses in which we were plunged, was to be added, that there was reason to apprehend that this invaluable jewel would be lost to the British Crown. Oh for some warning voice to proclaim to ministers the ruin with which their system is pregnant! In every thing their mean and miserable policy had been disappointed. They had tried to divide the people of Ireland by their religious principles, and they were now united against common oppression. If ministers thought, by granting a little to withhold a great deal, they would not succeed. Such shuffling policy could no longer be attended with success. These points he had introduced, that the House might see the consequences of the want of good faith in public men. They had experienced the bad effects of pursuing such a system. Under the conduct of ministers, it had brought us to the brink of ruin. The system would be complete, if the profligate measures of administration were crowned with the sanction of parliament. Mr. Grey concluded with moving the first of the following Resolutions:—

1. "That the governor and deputy governor of the Bank did, at various times, subsequent to the month of March, 1795, and in the most forcible terms, represent to the chancellor of the exchequer the danger arising to the Bank from the diminution of its specie.

2. "That it appears, that, during this period, the directors of the Bank frequently remonstrated with the chancellor of the exchequer on the magnitude of their Advances to government, anxiously requiring payment, or a considerable reduction of the same; and that the chancellor of the exchequer did again and again, in the most explicit terms, promise that reductions should be made.

3. "That the chancellor of the exchequer, instead of performing these engagements, did continually solicit farther accommodation, in the most anxious and pressing terms, declaring that it was impossible to avoid the most serious embarrassments to the public service, unless the directors of the Bank afforded the assistance he required.

4. "That it appears, that although by these means, the directors of the Bank were induced to comply with his demands, they generally expressed their reluctance in strong language and that they at last, that is to say on the 28th of July 1796, thought it necessary, for

their own justification, to request the chancellor of the exchequer to lay before his majesty's cabinet their most serious and solemn remonstrance, in which they declare, that, 'sensible of the alarming and dangerous state of public credit, nothing could induce them to comply with the demand then made upon them, but the dread that their refusal might be productive of a greater evil.'

5. "That it appears, that, during the above period, a considerable portion of the Bank advances was occasioned by payments of bills of exchange drawn from foreign parts on the commissioners of his majesty's treasury.

6. "That it appears, that it had seldom been the custom of the Bank of England, to advance, on the account of bills drawn on the Treasury, more than from 20,000*l.* to 30,000*l.*; and that, even during the American war, such bills never exceeded, at any one time, the sum of 150,000*l.*, the wisdom of our ancestors having foreseen, and provided against the mischief of such advances, by a clause in an act, passed in the 5th year of William and Mary, by which the governor and company of the Bank of England were restrained from advancing money to government on any other securities than those on which a credit is granted by parliament.

7. "That it appears, that from and after the year 1793, at which time an act of parliament passed, containing a clause by which the directors of the Bank are indemnified for the advances they had made on bills drawn from abroad, and exempted in future from the penalties of the said act of William and Mary, respecting such advances to government, the amount of treasury bills paid at the Bank continued progressively to increase, and that between the 1st of January 1795, and the 25th of February 1797, sums amounting in the whole to upwards of 15,000,000*l.* were advanced to government upon this head.

8. "That it appears that the directors of the Bank did, at various times, during the years 1795, 1796, and 1797, apply to the chancellor of the exchequer for re-payment of such advances, and represented to him the extreme inconvenience to themselves, and to the public, of continuing the system of making treasury bills payable at the Bank; and that they even declared they conceived it to be an 'unconstitutional mode of raising money, and what they were not warranted by their charter to consent to.'

9. "That it appears, that the chancellor of the exchequer did, at various times during that period, promise and engage to reduce the advances on that head within the sum of 500,000*l.*, and likewise so to arrange his payments as to put an end to the account; but that, nevertheless, the said promises and engagements were not adhered to by him, and that the advances on treasury bills, during the whole period from January 1795, to the 28th of February 1797, amounted, on an average, to the sum of 1,320,000*l.* and upwards, and

on the day last mentioned stood at 1,619,049*l*.

10. "That it appears to this House, that foreign remittances to a much larger amount than ever were known in a similar period of the most expensive wars in which this country has been involved, have taken place since the year 1793.

11. "That the extent of such remittances, occasioned at so early a period as the end of the year 1794, and the beginning of the year 1795, great alarm in the minds of the directors of the Bank of England, which they at various periods communicated to the chancellor of the exchequer; and that on the 3rd Dec. 1795, under the apprehension that it was intended to grant a farther loan to the Emperor, they came to a resolution, by which they declared their unanimous opinion, that should such a loan take place, it would be 'most fatal in its consequences to the Bank of England.' That they communicated such resolution to the chancellor of the exchequer, who assured them, 'he should lay aside all thoughts of it, unless the situation of things relative to the Bank should so alter as to render such a loan of no importance or inconvenience to them.

12. "That on the 5th Feb. 1796, the chancellor of the exchequer, after stating, in conversation with the governor and deputation from the Bank of England, his opinion of the necessity of farther assisting the Emperor, promised, however to take no step in that business without previously communicating to them his intention.

13. "That on the 11th of February 1796, the directors of the Bank passed unanimously the following resolutions:—Resolved, That it 'is the opinion of this court, founded upon the experience of the effects of the late imperial loan, that if any farther loan or advance of money to the Emperor, or to any other foreign state, should in the present state of affairs take place, it will in all probability prove fatal to the Bank of England. The court of directors, therefore, do most earnestly deprecate the adoption of any such measure, and they solemnly protest against any responsibility for the calamitous consequences that may follow thereupon.'—To which resolution when communicated to him the chancellor of the exchequer returned for answer: 'That, after the repeated intimations which he had given to the governor, &c. of the Bank, that no farther loan to the Emperor would be resolved on without previous communication with the Bank, he did not see any reason for these resolutions; that he did suppose they were adopted in a moment of alarm, and that he should consider them in that light.'

14. "That both from the general tenor of the said answer, and from its particular reference to the substance and matter of the resolution then communicated to him, the governor, &c. of the Bank were unavoidably led to understand, that the chancellor of the ex-

chequer continued bound by promise to them not to negotiate a loan for the service of his imperial majesty, nor to make any remittance either to his said imperial majesty or any foreign prince, under any pretence whatever, without previously communicating such his intention to the Bank of England. That the directors did so understand him; and that, in their opinion, unless his answer to their resolution was meant to apply to the whole of its contents the conduct of the chancellor of the exchequer was disingenuous.

15. "That nevertheless the chancellor of the exchequer, for some time prior to February 11, 1796, clandestinely remitted, and did for several months subsequent, clandestinely remit, for various foreign services, large sums of money, in defiance of his repeated promises and particularly in violation of the engagements which were implied in the assurances given by him to the Bank of England, upon their resolution of the 11th of February.

16. "That it appears, that, if the said advances of the Bank to government had been paid off when required, or considerably reduced, the Bank would have been enabled to reduce, if expedient, the amount of its outstanding notes, and that such option would have been of essential service to its interests.

17. "That it appears from the evidence of persons connected with the Bank, that if the said advances had been paid off, when required, or considerably reduced, the Bank would have been enabled to give more extended aid to the mercantile interests of Great Britain in the way of discount.

18. "That it appears, that if the advances on treasury bills had been paid off when required, and as the chancellor of the exchequer had promised, and the foreign remittances abstained from, as the chancellor of the exchequer had likewise promised, the necessity would, probably, not have existed for the order of council.

19. "That it appears to this House, upon the most attentive consideration of the circumstances above stated, that the chancellor of the exchequer has been guilty of a criminal inattention to the public interest, and a high breach of duty, by which the credit of the nation has been materially impaired."

The first Resolution being put,

Mr. Pitt said, that before he entered into a discussion of the various topics aduced by the hon. gentleman, he should trouble the House with a few words on one point. He meant the consideration, whether, under all the various circumstances existing previous to the 26th of February, 1797, government was justifiable in issuing the order of council of that date. That subject had already been so amply discussed, that it could not be considered too assuming in him to maintain that a contrary opinion could not possibly exist.

It was fully admitted, that it would have been unwise and impolitic to have suffered the Bank to have followed its own course, and to have rejected the interference of government. That opinion was recognized by the committee, who, however they might differ on other points, had been unanimous in that position. It was also the sentiment of the directors of the Bank themselves, and of the evidences examined on the subject, that it would have been followed by the most dangerous consequences, if the bank had been suffered to be drained of its last guinea. He next came to what were termed the principal and leading causes which had produced the scarcity of cash, but which were pointed directly at his own official conduct; and here he should observe, that however copiously these causes had been stated by the hon. gentleman, they might in his mind be reduced to a few simple and plain points. The motion submitted to the House appeared to him to rest on two distinct grounds: 1st, as to the advances made to government by the bank in general, and the remittances made to the Emperor; and 2dly, with respect to the inferences drawn by the hon. gentleman, that these two circumstances were the principal causes which produced the order for suspending the issuing of cash by the Bank. He should naturally call the attention of the House to the first part, which related to himself and the Bank; and he should beg leave to argue, that many other circumstances, and those very powerful in their operation, were to be taken into consideration, exclusive of the causes assigned by the hon. gentleman; and when those circumstances to which he alluded came to be discussed, he would submit to the House whether they were not more prevalent in producing the order of council than those suggested by the hon. mover. That repeated applications had been made to him on the part of the bank directors, with respect to the advances and remittances complained of, he was ready to admit; and that assurances had been given by him to reduce the advance to 500,000*l.* he was very far from questioning. But the House was in justice bound to consider of what peculiar nature those circumstances were which prevented him from carrying into execution the assurances so given. When the magnitude and diversity of the operations of the present war were fairly viewed; when the unforeseen

exigencies which called for unforeseen expenses were candidly weighed, he trusted that it would not be denied, that it was completely impossible to ascertain, with any exactness, the amount of the disbursements likely to be incurred, or to form estimates on which any reliance could be placed. Since, therefore, that position could not be refuted, and the impossibility of bringing forward certain estimates was established by experience, the only question that remained to be decided by the House was in fact, whether the assurances made by government were given with an evident intention of carrying them into execution? Gentlemen should also consider the particular steps that had been taken to fulfil these assurances and they would then be enabled to judge of the sincerity of intention with which they had been advanced. It had been argued that the bill of 1793 was in contradiction to the act of William and Mary, on the subject of making advances by the Bank to government. The fact was directly contrary to that statement; for he would maintain, that the legal construction of the act of William and Mary did not go to prevent the Bank from advancing money to government, but merely to prevent the anticipation of parliamentary grants. It was necessary to remark, in discussing this point, that the Bank did actually make advances to government during the last war; and if the directors of the Bank had conceived that they exposed themselves by such a proceeding to the penalties provided by the act of William and Mary, they certainly would not have consented to that measure. But they had made advances to a considerable amount, and bills of exchange had been also drawn in the same period, with the only difference, that they had been drawn by individuals, and not by corporate bodies. Besides, it should be impressed on the minds of gentlemen, that the bill of 1793, which was said to repeal that of king William and Mary was not introduced in a clandestine manner, but in the most open and parliamentary way. It was introduced by a resolution of the committee appointed for that express purpose, and that resolution was recorded on the Journals of the House. The bill itself stood at that moment on the Statute book with the title "to remove doubts occasioned by the former act."—The hon. gentleman had noticed in one of his resolutions, that the trea-

sure bills paid by the Bank amounted to 15 millions; but the question was not, what had, or what had not been paid, but what was the amount of the out-standing debt, and what the opportunities government had to discharge it. He felt, that he lay under peculiar disadvantage in stating—but it was a disadvantage which no human foresight could possibly provide for—that he had been very much disappointed in the unexpected amount of the bills drawn from the continent. It was equally true, that the same disappointment took place with respect to the sums drawn for to meet the exigencies of the war in the West Indies, and he could not even at that moment state what might be their exact amount. Therefore when the hon. gentleman contended as an argument in favour of his own conclusions, that there had been many disappointments in the different budgets, he contended for a matter which could not be denied, and was certainly an affair of great and serious concern; but he at the same time admitted that the financial statements were correct, founded as they evidently were, on the probable estimates laid before the House. With respect to the sincerity of intention manifested by government, in their endeavours to carry into execution the assurances made of reducing the advances, he should beg leave to refer to No. 10 of the Appendix to the Report of the Select Committee, by which it appeared that the outstanding bills of exchange were reduced on the 5th of January 1795, to 1,796,000*l.* and on the 31st of March, to 500,000*l.* That they were not kept to that low sum, he could only object the increase of the great and unavoidable expenses which could not be foreseen in the prosecution of the war. What, he would ask, was the amount of the bills of exchange paid by government from the 5th of Jan. 1795, to the 5th of Jan. 1796? They would be found to make the vast sum of 8 millions, while the outstanding bills were only 500,000*l.* In making this statement, he merely wished to prove to the satisfaction of the House, that the declaration on his part to carry into execution the assurances made of reducing the advances to government was perfectly sincere, and he had only to lament that his most sanguine desires, and his constant exertions to attain that great object, had failed from the most unavoidable circumstances. The admission of the governors and directors of the bank themselves was

a point which should not be overlooked. So far were they from thinking that advances to government were prejudicial to them, that their own conduct furnished a strong refutation of that idea. After their representations to him in November, on the danger of making advances, they absolutely agreed to the same measure in the subsequent month of July, and then advanced money on the land and malt, notwithstanding their previous remonstrances. —He next came to the question of the remittances made to the Emperor in 1796; and here he would submit to the candour of the House, whether the assurances made to the Bank of reducing the advances, could, with the least degree of consistency, be understood as operating to bind up the executive government from making any remittances whatever, however great the urgency of such a measure might be, and, however necessary for the public safety. The result of such an argument, if it were once admitted, would clearly be, that the executive government would give up every means of acting as it was bound to do, for the service of the state, and according to the exigence of the case which might occur. When such a motion as was then before the House was insisted on, it certainly was not too much to ask, that the grounds on which the charge was made should be plain and free from ambiguity. Without, therefore, meaning any personal application as to himself, he was at liberty to require that the House should weigh with peculiar caution an evidence arising out of a verbal correspondence, and in which one of the parties was absent, and not even consulted when it was committed to writing, after an interval of two or three days. For such was the nature of the testimony laid before the committee in the minutes of the directors relative to their applications to him, and his answers to those applications. Since, therefore, the evidence was of so very loose a kind, the House was called upon to act with peculiar delicacy. The advances which had taken place since the applications of the directors to him, arose evidently out of a new state of things, and could not apply to any discussion on that subject which had previously existed between them. Since the evidence laid before the committee had been so minutely dwelt on by the hon. gentleman, he also thought it necessary to refer in his own defence to that testimony. Mr. Giles stated, that the

conversation which had taken place was relative both to the loan and to the advances, yet it was somewhat singular, that in the minutes made of that conversation, no mention whatever was made of the advances. Mr. Raikes, on the contrary, positively stated, that the conversation had no relation whatever to future advances. Thus, though there appeared no evidence that the conversation related to advances, and though no notice whatever had been given to him on that subject, it was directly pressed upon him as a specific ground of crimination, and he was to be censured for a breach of faith, in not considering himself bound to the performance of a condition with which he was perfectly unacquainted. If the directors of the Bank were actually in possession of evidence which they had reason to think might convict him, was it to be believed that they would not bring it directly forward as a charge against him, more particularly as they were led to consider it in the light of a measure on which their own safety so essentially depended? But so very far was the testimony from being incontrovertible, that it rested on the most feeble grounds, and was in itself perfectly contradictory, one gentleman stating a matter which was not recorded in the minutes, and the other giving evidence directly contrary to the former's declaration. He therefore was convinced the House would pause before they attached criminality upon any one, upon evidence so unfounded, and likely to be mistaken. The advances which were made, were different in point of spirit and effect from a loan; they were made secretly and gradually; whereas a loan must, from its nature, be public: but there was a material difference in the amount, for the whole of the advances amounted only to about 900,000*l*. It appeared that the Bank apprehended the most destructive consequences from a loan of three million to the Emperor; and yet, what was the effect of those remittances? Why, that the exchange which was against us at the commencement of them, during their continuance, turned completely in our favour. From this statement, the argument might be pushed to the extent of stating, that the Bank were in an error with respect to the consequences which they apprehended from a loan of three millions; but without going to that extent, it afforded him an answer to the charge made against him, be-

cause the consequences attending the remittances were totally different from those which it was supposed would attend the measure to which the Bank objected.— He came now to the consideration of a question, infinitely more important in a national point of view, viz. how far the advances made by the Bank to government, or to the Emperor, were the immediate causes of those difficulties of the Bank which led to the order of council. As to the advances made to government, the hon. gentleman had not stated how they would tend to drain the Bank of cash; but he supposed the hon. gentleman meant, that it would have that effect by increasing the number of notes. In order to ascertain that point, it would be necessary to ascertain how far the number of notes bore a proportion to the quantity of advances made to government. He did not believe they did; and he would state one convincing circumstance to corroborate his assertion. In 1783, the amount of the advances made by the Bank to government, varied very little from those made at present, and yet the number of Bank notes were not any thing near what they were now. Nothing could be more decisive than this fact; because here were two periods in which the amount of the advances were the same, and the quantity of the notes essentially different. He did not mean from this to infer, that the number of notes bore no reference to the amount of the advances, but that the one did not increase in proportion to the other. Another point of view in which this was to be considered was, that it obliged the Bank to diminish their discounts, and consequently tended to increase the commercial distress. He was fully able to discuss this point; but it did not form the question then in dispute between them. The report of the committee did not state the amount of the cash and bullion in the Bank; but he had strong reasons to suppose, that the advances had not in any degree affected the state of cash; so that, in every point of view, this argument fell to the ground. He now came to the opinion of Mr. Giles, that if the advances had been re-paid to the Bank, the Bank would have been safe. What was meant by their saying that the Bank would be safe? Was it meant that they would be in a state of solvency, that they would wind up their affairs, and put an end to their functions? Surely it could not be meant in that sense; but whether

it would be safe as the Bank, safe as a great commercial body, safe for all the purposes for which it was established. With respect to the safety of the Bank, he was of opinion, that it consisted in giving vigour to the trade and commerce of the country, by diffusing a circulating medium, without which the nation would be unable to preserve its independence. It was, he acknowledged, a question of vast importance, how far a greater or less issue of paper was favourable to commerce. The hon. gentleman said, that the Bank of England departed from the character of simplicity and honesty, which ought to distinguish all establishments of that kind, when they had not money sufficient to discharge all their out-standing notes. Now, he would assert, that if banks were compelled to have, upon every unfunded alarm, a sufficient quantity of money to answer the demands that might possibly be made upon them, there was at once an end to that principle upon which banking had uniformly been conducted. That principle he had always understood to be the employing a circulating capital greater than the real one.—The hon. gentleman had offered no new arguments to show that it was improper in the Bank to increase their issues of paper. When a part of the circulating capital necessary for the purposes of commerce had, by whatever means, been taken out of the country, it was necessary to replenish the void which had been created. The only obvious means of doing this, was to issue Bank notes so long as a demand for them existed. No man who had at all considered the nature of a paper circulation would be ignorant that it was founded upon the existence of a proportionate quantity of cash; but then the quantity of cash must not necessarily be equal to the amount of the paper circulated upon it. It was known that a banker never kept such a quantity of cash in his house as would answer every possible demand upon him; because, if he did, there would be an end of banking. Men acquainted with the nature of the business, could easily calculate the proper proportions between the quantity of cash and of paper. There was no doubt, if a banker was reduced to distress from a number of notes coming in upon him, that it would not be a wise expedient for him to increase the quantity of his notes. But if a banking house was in complete possession of public confidence, and there was a great

demand for their notes, he was rather inclined to think that, under such circumstances, a farther emission of notes might be proper. Upon this point, experience at least, was on his side. There were periods at which the cash of the Bank was reduced lower than at the time when the order of council was issued, and periods, too, when no foreign drain existed; and yet at those times the Bank tried the experiment of increasing their paper circulation, and succeeded. The hon. gentleman entertained great doubts, whether any diminution in circulation could be ascribed as a cause of the stopping of the Bank, and therefore seemed to conclude, that that event was entirely owing to the money sent out of the country. But did not the hon. gentleman acknowledge, that the amount of country Bank notes in circulation had been greatly reduced? And was it not obvious that the operation of this diminution would be a demand for cash, or some other substitute, wherever it could be found? Now the notes of the Bank of England affording an easy opportunity to the holder to turn them into cash, it was evident that the decrease of country bank notes would tend to drain the bank of specie.—He came next to the question, how far the money sent out of the country, to the Emperor, or to any other power, had led to the order of council of the 26th of February last. He should, in the first place, observe, that if it was established that there were a great number of other causes, which might all have equally conspired to produce that event, it could not, with any degree of justice, be ascribed to that one alone. If it was established, that an increased capital required an increased circulation, and that there was at the same time a diminution in the amount of country bank notes which operated to make a run on the Bank—if these and many other causes appeared to have had a share in occasioning those circumstances which rendered the order of council necessary, he believed the hon. gentleman would find it impossible to persuade them that it was occasioned solely by the remittances to the Emperor; even though it were to be admitted that these remittances had carried out of the country a considerable quantity of specie or bullion. There were many different theories of the balance of trade; but he would not subscribe to any of them, upon however high authority they might stand, without

consulting his own judgment. Much as he respected the opinions of that great writer, whose works the hon. gentleman had quoted, he could not help dissenting from several maxims which he had advanced. He thought that great author, though always ingenious, sometimes injudicious. It would be found, however, that Mr. Adam Smith, instead of going the length of the hon. gentleman, had treated it as a vulgar opinion, that a number of millions sent out of the country during war was injurious to commerce. The hon. gentleman had given an admonition to the House, and he would take advantage of that admonition. He had said, that if two events accompanied each other, it was not proper to assert, that one was the cause, and the other the effect. He would say also, and he believed the hon. gentleman would agree with him in that opinion, that, though one event should be predicted to be the effect of another, it was neither just nor proper to conclude, merely because it so happened, that the prediction was founded in truth.—Much had been said by the hon. gentleman of the distressed state of the country; but when the state of the exchange was proved to be favourable, and the exports increasing, it would be impossible for him to prevail on the House to believe, that our trade was in such a situation as he had described it. Indeed, it was a great consolation for the House to reflect, that commerce had poured wealth into the country, in a far greater proportion than the expenses of war had drawn it out. It was a fact not to be disputed, that the quantity of money now in the country was not less than at the beginning of the war. Such were the grounds upon which he opposed the motion.—Mr. Pitt then withdrew.

Mr. Fox said, that after the clear, perspicuous, and eloquent speech of his hon. friend, he would not detain the House long, while he made a few observations on what had fallen from the right hon. gentleman in a speech of great length and considerable labour. That labour had been much employed on doubtful points of theory, on which it was natural to expect some difference of opinion; on points, many of which were against himself, and which he had in no instance answered; on others, in which he had grounded his defence on an entire misrepresentation of the evidence to which he had referred; and on many, in which he had made use

of the most forced and unnatural constructions. The minister was accused of having been in a considerable degree the cause of the failure of the Bank, and that in a way to which he had not fairly adverted in the course of his speech. What was the misfortune chiefly complained of upon that head? That of the destruction of public credit. What was the mode by which that destruction was effected? It was by the notorious want of public faith in the conduct of the minister. That was the accusation which the minister had to answer. He defended himself by elaborate arguments, tending to show that his want of faith, or rather that the issues which he had occasioned from the Bank, were not the exclusive cause of the failure there. That was never stated to be so. It was never pretended that other causes might not have had a share in producing the effect. There were causes which we could not prevent, that might have contributed to the evil; but the minister was not accused on their account, he was only accused of what he could have prevented, and what it was his duty to prevent. There was no doubt but that the alarm of invasion had a considerable share in causing the drain upon the Bank. That alarm, perhaps, the minister could not prevent altogether, although it was an alarm which he might have diminished; but the charge against him was of another nature, a charge which, indeed, he had not answered. There was one part of the minister's argument which would be very convenient to him, if the House gave it full credit. It was this—that if it could not be proved how much could be ascribed to each cause, it was unfair to blame him from that which had happened to public credit. In order to answer this, it was sufficient to say that much of the evil was owing to the conduct of the minister, however other events might also have contributed to augment it. That such conduct had had that effect, was evident from experience. We had known other alarms of an invasion, and yet the effect was not the same upon the Bank, as in the present case. But even supposing the conduct of the minister had not produced the evils which it actually did produce, still he would say that his conduct was criminal upon the face of it, because it had a direct tendency to produce evil. The charge against the minister was twofold: first, that he had caused the Bank to make unseasonable advances, and to an enor-

mous amount, upon treasury bills. Upon this the minister defended himself by stating, that the act of parliament, upon the authority of which this practice had taken place, was not a clandestine act of parliament. We all know, that, strictly speaking, there could be no such thing as a clandestine law; that every body was bound to know it; that it was the duty of the members of that House to attend to and watch the progress of every bill in the House; but yet, speaking the language of practical common sense, it was well known that many things passed as business of course in that House, to which the mass of the House were inattentive; nor could the minister blame them for being so, since he himself had stated, that in the multiplicity of public affairs, he had forgot to attend to a subject in which millions of money were concerned. However, the minister had introduced a clause into the act of William and Mary, which amounted to a complete evasion of the salutary provisions of that statute. He called it a clause only to remove doubts; doubts which he hardly thought worth entertaining; so little did that appear to be so, that he had, on the contrary, a clear opinion that the statute, before the minister introduced his clause in it, absolutely prohibited, under a severe penalty, the issuing of money in the manner in which the Bank had afterwards issued it to government. The minister had said, that the Bank had done so before this clause passed. That many things had been done which were irregular, he had no doubt: nor was it difficult to assign a reason why the directors should apply for an amendment to an act, the provisions of which inflicted a penalty on themselves for what, out of inadvertency, or a disposition to oblige the minister, they had formerly done. But the act alluded to, was not that for which the directors applied; they had applied only for that which would empower them to issue money to a limited sum. The act was passed to empower them to issue money, but omitting any thing like limitation to the sum. This was criminal in the minister; for it gave to him a fatal facility of command over all the cash in the Bank; and we all knew the use he had made of that power. He said now, indeed, that he intended to make a moderate use of that power. He promised to do so. He said, that he intended to keep his word. He made that promise six times; and it was six times

he broke that promise. This might do very well for such a minister as the present; but he apprehended that, if a man was to follow such a practice in private life, his reputation for honesty would not stand very high. The minister said, that he calculated upon the probability of circumstances as well as he could, but they came so thick upon him, that he was disappointed. That might be an apology for the second application; but what was to be said for the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth? were they all to be apologies for one another, as the first was for the second? They certainly could not: there was evident misconduct on the face of it. But the minister laid great stress upon the sums which he had caused to be repaid into the Bank from time to time, to keep his engagement with the directors. To which the answer was, that was not the engagement. The engagement was, that the Bank should never be in advance to government beyond a certain sum. The Bank had never said, if he paid them one, two, three, four, five, or any number of millions, that then he should draw upon them to any amount he pleased. The engagement was, that government should never be in their debt at any one time above half a million. That was the promise which the minister had frequently made, and as frequently broken. This was a crime in the minister. Had it happened but once, and that when parliament was not sitting, there might have been something like an excuse for it. But he followed this practice for a whole year, and never once intimated it to parliament, although, in that time, he brought forward a loan, and opened, as he said, to the House, all the circumstances of the finance of the country. He concealed all this from the House and the public, even after the strong memorial of the Bank against his conduct. He even, after all this, advised his majesty, in the month of October, to tell us, that there had been a temporary difficulty, but concealed that he had thus extorted money from the Bank. Nothing appeared at that time to prove that he had failed to fulfil his promises with the Bank. At that time, therefore, he made no provision for this extortion. Perhaps the minister did not think of these trifles at that time; his mind was otherwise employed; it was occupied, perhaps, with his cavalry, militia, and other good and popular bills, which were passing at that period, and he was willing

that the members should go into the country with nothing upon their minds, but the plan whereby these excellent bills should be carried into effect. He could not find in the time he had one day to come to the House, and avow the truth upon the state of the finance of the country. And now that these things were objected to, the minister expected to be acquitted by the House; that was to say, he laid his case before a House of Commons that had an entire dependence on the will of the Crown, and was wholly unconnected with the people, and therefore regardless of their interests. He had not time to ask the House of Commons, whether they would enable him to fulfil a promise which he had made without their consent, or even knowledge. He had not time to inform us of what he was doing, although he must afterwards call for taxes to defray the expense of it. Here Mr. Fox went over the material parts of the evidence in the report, in order to show that the drain upon the Bank was pointed out to the chancellor of the exchequer, as well as the effect which it would produce, and also to prove that the directors understood the chancellor of the exchequer to promise, that no farther loan or advances should be made to the Emperor before those already made by the Bank were reduced. The contrary of the whole of which promise was the conduct of the minister, and that was the most material charge against him. Here he blamed the directors for not having referred to the letter and the spirit of the constitution, and have come to the House and stated the whole truth, in order to give the House an opportunity of stopping the minister in his ruinous career. But what would be the effect on the public mind in consequence of what had happened? They would first of all feel, that the House had entered into a dreadful war upon the authority of the minister; they would then perceive, that in consequence of the connexion between the minister and the Bank, the expense of a great part of that war was to be supported for a time by advances made by the Bank to that minister without so much as the knowledge of the representatives of the people; and this was, after all, a free constitution, where the minister kept from the knowledge of the people, even the mode of raising the money which they were to pay! He knew that there was some excuse for the directors, for the terror that was held out to

them might have had some effect upon their conduct, to say nothing of the possibility of another species of influence; but the minister was left absolutely without excuse.—He then proceeded upon the subject of the drain of cash, and assigned for it reasons very different from those urged by the chancellor of the exchequer. He ridiculed the idea that an attempt on the part of the Bank to lessen the outstanding demands against it, in order to preserve its credit, would be injurious to their interests, &c. as also the notions of the minister upon what he called the necessity of increasing the circulating medium before it was proved that our capital was increased. Such attempts resembled those of a person who, because specie was scarce, changed his gold into silver, and silver into gold, every day, in order to avoid the inconvenience of a general scarcity of specie. He contended also that there was much fallacy in the minister's conclusions from the imports and exports in the course of the war, and by which he had attempted to impose upon the House. The minister had been pleased to say nothing to us of comfort on the general scale of Europe, well knowing he could not do so. The only point of consolation he had attempted was that of the extent of our commerce. There was one point upon that subject in which he concurred with the minister, namely, that theories upon these matters could not be trusted, except where they were accompanied by experience. He thought the House ought to look at our increased debt with some caution. It was now increased to 400 millions and upwards. The burden imposed upon the people was seven millions annually, and this we were not sure we should be able to continue. There was a situation in human affairs in which it was said, that ignorance was a blessing, and that it would be a folly to become wise. We were now in that situation. It was hardly worth while to awaken us out of our dream of prosperity, when it was clear, that when we awoke we could only see that we could hardly save ourselves from destruction. The question before the House was this: whether the House would choose to support the minister, and thereby run the country to certain and immediate ruin, or take the chance of saving it for some time by their exertion.

Mr. H. Thornton moved the previous question on the first resolution, on the ground that the chancellor of the exche-

quer ought not to be censured for a breach of promise, when circumstances of an unforeseen nature had arisen which had rendered it impossible that his promise should be fulfilled.

The previous question being put, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Sheridan - - -	}	66
		Mr. William Smith -		
NOES	{	Lord Muncaster - -	}	206
		Mr. Henry Thornton-		

So it passed in the negative. The previous question being put upon the rest of the resolutions, excepting the last, it passed in the negative. On the last resolution, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. St. John - - -	}	60
		Mr. M. A. Taylor -		
NOES	{	Lord Hawkesbury -	}	206
		Mr. Neville - - -		

So it passed in the negative.

Debate on Mr. Wilberforce's Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.] May 15. Mr. Wilberforce said, that he was about to bring under the consideration of the House, a subject so well known and so often discussed, as to render it altogether unnecessary for him to trouble them at any length. It was a subject that had been nine years before the House, in the course of which the House at one time came to a clear and explicit resolution that the Slave Trade should be abolished the 1st of January 1796. This it was well known had not been effected: and so recently as this session the House had voted an address to his majesty, avowedly tending only to a gradual abolition. He now, therefore, called on the House to revise these resolutions, and as they valued their consistency, to adopt the motion with which he should conclude. Some might conceive, and, perhaps, would attempt to urge, that the House was bound by the address then voted, and that his present proposition would be incompetent with that resolution. This, however, he denied, and contended that both were perfectly reconcileable. The House had been blamed for too much feeling on the subject. He, on the contrary, thought them liable to an opposite charge, conceiving that in many the passages of the heart were stopped by the prevailing influence of a spirit of traffic. From the

operation of this principle, they had been induced to acquiesce in the continuation of a trade avowedly incompatible with justice, humanity, and sound policy; in consequence of which, nearly one third of the habitable globe was consigned to ignorance and bondage. Such were the odious effects of this baleful system that he could attribute the present state of the colonies, and the terrible mortality that had taken place there, to nothing but divine vengeance for the guilt of continuing it. He had heard lately one objection urged to his plan, to which he wished to give an answer. It was said, that a gentleman of very high authority (Mr. Burke), though he once entertained the same object, yet did not propose similar means to obtain it. The fact was, however, that this gentleman's plan did not relate to the slave trade, but to the existence of slavery, which, in the benevolence of his nature he naturally wished to cease. With the great facts of the present case he was unacquainted, and sought not to arrest the wrongs of Africa, but to disseminate liberty in the colonies. Having different objects in view it was no objection to either that they adopted different means to obtain them. He concluded by moving "for leave to bring in a bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, at a time to be limited," and, as a necessary preliminary to that motion, he moved, "That the House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider of that motion."

Mr. Ellis opposed the motion. If the advantage of the trade was disputable, the planters were, he said, the most obstinate men alive: for they had expended half a million in purchasing slaves since they were advised not to do so. The question was, whether the trade should be carried on by this country in ships proper for the reception of the slaves, and under responsible captains, or should become a contraband traffic in small vessels, managed by persons under no control whatever? He reprobated the effects produced in Africa by this trade, and doubted whether commerce was really so great a blessing as was stated: our visits to civilized nations were accompanied by presents of brandy and fire-arms; thus their ferocious passions were irritated, and they were at the same time furnished with the means of indulging them. The desolation of one quarter of the globe had been the consequence of

this excessive spirit of commerce; yet, while human nature remained as it was, the continuance of this traffic was indispensable. The negroes in the West Indies did not desire the abolition; for they considered any obstacle to the importation of new slaves as a prolongation and increase of their present labours.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—This subject has been so often discussed within these walls, that scarcely any thing new can be adduced; but as I had not, until lately, the honour of a seat in parliament, I hope I shall stand excused for trespassing a short time upon the attention of the House. There is nothing, in my judgment, Sir, so nefarious as a trade in human blood. It is wrong in principle—it admits of no modification—the immediate abolition of it is loudly called for by every consideration of religion, morality, and even of sound policy. The planters have always contended, that if the British parliament should abolish the slave trade, they would suffer great injury for want of fresh supplies of negroes. Undoubtedly, the planters would sustain some loss until they had substituted machinery, and some of the various methods of facilitating labour; but the person who engages in any species of merchandise, takes upon himself the risk of its being suspended, or even annihilated, by the legislative powers, whenever it shall appear conducive to the public welfare, or incompatible with the rights of justice and humanity: on no other principles could legislation be conducted. But the argument most insisted upon in our last discussion of this question, was, the impracticability of enforcing the abolition of the slave trade, even should the House determine upon that measure. Who are the gentlemen, who press this observation upon the House? The planters. I mean not to speak disrespectfully of this body of men, but I must own that there appears to me an inconsistency in their reasoning. If they say that this country cannot prevent importations of negroes into the islands, let them no longer complain that the abolition of the trade would injure them by cutting off all fresh supplies. For my own part, I am persuaded, that British force, vigilantly exerted, is fully capable of frustrating every attempt to land negro cargoes; nay, the planters themselves, whatever may be the language they now hold out, are as well convinced of it as myself. Were they under the influence of the no-

tion that the power of England could not prevent fresh imports of slaves, would they with such zeal and unabating perseverance, have opposed every endeavour to terminate this detestable traffic? Certainly not. But, at all events, the experiment is worth the trial. If the abolition of the trade should be voted by parliament, and it should be found impracticable to smuggle African negroes into the West India islands what would be the happy consequence? The planters would feel it their interest to render the lives of the slaves in the islands more comfortable. They would attend to the proper proportion between the sexes of the negroes; they would promote marriage with one woman as the most fertile means of propagation; they would rear the progeny with care and kindness. But if we commit the whole affair into the hands of the colonial legislatures, what is to be expected? Some regulations may be made in behalf of the slave, but they will be of no avail to him, because it will be the interest only of himself to see them executed. Will he dare resort to a legal remedy for the ill usage he has received from his master, who has it in his power to embitter his existence by a thousand methods beyond the reach of any law? No, Sir. The greatest practical oppression may exist with a theoretical perfection of law. Let us, then, aid the scheme of the planter for the melioration of the condition of his slaves, by destroying the trade on our part, and thus making his interest and duty to go hand in hand. We shall, by voting the abolition of the trade, have wiped out a foul blot from our national character; we shall have endeavoured to raise a portion of reasonable beings from a degraded state of brutality; we shall have used our utmost exertions to remove a strong impediment to the civilization and improvement of one quarter of the world. Africa, while it is made a market for slaves, cannot be free; cannot, indeed, emerge from the barbarism in which she is at present plunged.

Mr. *Sewell* said, that by adopting the motion, the House would act inconsistently with the resolution it had come to, by which the colonial assemblies were to be addressed on the subject of improving the situation of the slaves. If the African trade was abolished by England, it would be immediately taken up by Spain. Indeed, that court was at present encouraging both its own subjects and foreigners,

to introduce negroes from Africa into its colonies in the West Indies, and from this source the British islands would be supplied. The trade would certainly cease in the course of time; but that could not be until all the lands belonging to the planters were in a state of cultivation.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that if the slave trade was not to cease till all the waste lands of the colonies were cultivated, the abolition would never be perceived even by our remotest posterity. He took notice of the inefficacy of the provisions already made for the melioration of the condition of the slaves, and concluded with supporting the motion.

Colonel *Gascoyne* opposed the intended bill. He said, that the merchants who had been stigmatized with the epithets inhuman, cruel, &c. had conducted themselves in a very different manner; for at Liverpool a meeting had been called at which it was resolved, that no ship should be allowed to clear out, whose captain and owners had not entered into an engagement under a penalty of 1,000*l.*, that they would fulfil every part of the act which had been passed for the regulation of the middle passage, even after that act had expired.

Mr. *Pitt* denied that the motion was inconsistent with the resolution which had passed some time ago. On the contrary, they both led to the very same end. The motion of his hon. friend looked to a gradual abolition, which would be forwarded by any internal regulations which should be adopted by the colonial legislatures, in consequence of the address of that House. With respect to waiting till the lands in the colonies were cultivated, it was the same thing as founding a new negro colony, and the object of abolition would never be accomplished by waiting for such an event. In that very statement he found an admission, that in some parts of the colonies which were well cultivated, the necessity of importation did not exist. This circumstance he was glad to hear, because it thus appeared, that there was no want of population in the old and well cultivated colonies. With respect to an act of the British parliament not being able to prevent smuggling, he would ask, if the example of this country could do nothing? But if the House thought the trade was one which, on principles of justice and humanity, ought to be put an end to, would they, because it could not be prohibited *in toto*, hold out

encouragement to it? Was there no difference between a prohibited and a protected trade? It was to the encouragement of parliament that the trade owed its existence: it was only by the discouragement of parliament, then, that it would be discontinued. Under this view of the subject, he must vote for his hon. friend's proposition. As far as the present was a question of policy, he conceived that the future safety of the islands themselves was a sufficient reason to induce gentlemen to vote for the abolition.

Mr. *Bryan Edwards* said, that the hon. mover had taken the sceptre from the hands of the Almighty, when he said, that the divine vengeance was now inflicted on the West India islands, in consequence of this traffic. He had forgotten, in this instance, the words of the poet:

"Let not this weak, unknowing hand
Presume Thy bolts to throw,
And deal damnation round the land
On each I judge thy foe."

The hon. gentleman had dealt his damnation somewhat roundly; but if he had recollected how many widows and orphans had their last stake in West India property, he would not, perhaps, have been so vehement in his indignation. He did not suppose the hon. gentleman capable of bearing false witness against his neighbour, but he ought not to have listened to the false and scandalous stories of those who did so. If he was desirous of exercising his humanity, he might meet many objects in this country; and in the metropolis, he had nothing to do but walk the streets, and he would even meet a race of blacks as worthy of his benevolent attention as those in the West Indies, namely, the chimney-sweepers. The proposition of the hon. gentleman was likely to produce the greatest mischiefs. The government of France had been destroyed by that country having interfered in the concerns of America. A bill for the abolition of the trade would emancipate the negroes. It would do more; it would cause them to rise in insurrection. The rebellion in St. Domingo, as he could assert from his own knowledge, was owing to the measures that had been agitated in France by those who called themselves "*Les Amis des Noirs*;" and this ought to be a serious lesson to the House.

Mr. *Canning* supported the motion.

General *Tarleton* was always of opinion,

that the abolition of the slave trade was improper. He was an advocate for reform, but did not think it should begin by injuring the West India merchants.

Sir *W. Young* said, that the measure proposed was a bill for enacting a revolution in the West Indies. He would not live in any country where he should be obliged to submit to such a law.

Mr. *Barham* said, that the present would defeat the measure lately resolved on by the House. It would also be nugatory and ineffectual.

Sir *W. Dolben* observed on the conduct of the merchants in having adopted the measures of the slave-carrying bill, even after it expired, although at the time when he had the honour of presenting that bill to the House, it had been as violently opposed as the motion then before them; and it had been said, that it would ruin the trade. This circumstance was the strongest argument to show, that the abolition would not be attended with those consequences which were stated as likely to result from it.

Mr. *Fox* said, it was curious to observe the course which the advocates for the trade had taken from time to time. At first the slave trade was defended by quotations from holy writ, and upon the authority of antient philosophers, Aristotle among the rest. It was stated to be conducive to the happiness of part of the human race, and particularly of the inhabitants of Africa. That was now given up. The trade was by all descriptions of men, admitted to be contrary to common justice and to right. Not much, however, had been practically gained; for now the promoters of the trade, finding they could not defend it upon its own principle, hypocritically canted against the principle, but still continued the practice. It was now allowed that the trade was unjust; but the House must not try to put an end to that injustice. What was the nature of that truth, the declaration of which, by the British parliament, tended to evil? This was like the argument that was urged against the people calling for peace; they were told that to ask for peace was a sure way to continue the war. Now, asking for the abolition of the African trade was a sure way to continue it. This was in other words saying, that plain sailing would not do; that we must tack and sail against the wind; that when the House meant to do any one thing, it must always profess to

have something else in view. He disapproved of such policy, and therefore was a friend to the present measure. He had heard it said that the legislature of this country should not control the colonies, and that the colonies, ought to resist. This reminded him of what he had said in the course of two bills of memorable character which had been passed into a law. He had said on that occasion something of resistance being a question of prudence and morality, and not of duty. Some persons thought he went too far, and especially many who supported the slave trade; and yet the advocates for that trade now maintained the same doctrine in support of that trade. It was singular enough that his principle of resistance in support of liberty at home was to be deemed alarming, and that resistance to law was only to be called forth in defence of slavery. We must not draw the sword in favour of our liberty, when attacked by an act of parliament, but the sword was allowed to be drawn in favour of the slave trade, if parliament attempted to abolish it! With regard to the question of legislating for the colonies, he had no difficulty in repeating what he had said on former occasions, that if we could not continue our connexion with the plantations, without continuing also the slave trade, it would be more to the honour, and finally to the advantage of Great Britain, to discontinue the connexion altogether. Mr. *Fox* concluded with calling on the House to support its honour, which was deeply pledged upon this subject, by giving leave to bring in a bill for abolishing a trade which was recorded to be one that was contrary to justice.

The question being put, "That this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider of the said motion," the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS { Mr. Whitbread - - - } 74
 { Mr. Canning - - - }

NOES { Sir William Young - - } 82
 { Mr. Foster Barham - - }

So it passed in the negative,

Debate on Mr. St. John's Motion for withdrawing the Troops from St. Domingo. May 18. Mr. *St. John* said, he certainly should not have attempted to bring forward his motion in so thin a House, had not frequent delays already

occurred. However callous they might have become by the many very disastrous scenes which had of late happened, yet, when the situation and fate of our brave countrymen in those pestilential climates were deliberately considered, it must excite one uniform wish in the breast of every man—a wish to rescue the remains of that gallant army from those climes of death. When he originally gave notice of his motion, he had not determined in his own mind whether to move for a committee, or for an address to his majesty, requesting the recall of the British troops from the island of St. Domingo. Whatever his doubts once were, now he could have none: the recent events in Europe had evinced the propriety of the latter motion, and therefore that was the motion he intended to submit to them: but if it were not so, there were two papers upon the table of the House, which contained every information that could be expected from a committee, and of themselves showed the necessity of his motion. The two papers were, the accounts of the bills from the island of St. Domingo, and the sad catalogue of the deaths of our unfortunate countrymen. Of late, indeed, it had been made matter of justification of ministers, that the expenses of the expedition of St. Domingo far exceeded their expectations: be it so; and allowing the climate of St. Domingo to be healthy, instead of pestiferous, yet, under the circumstances of Europe, he should think the measure of withdrawing our troops from thence extremely necessary; particularly from the separate peace made by the Emperor, leaving us to contend, single handed, against an enemy, who, by their vigour and energy, had beaten and disunited the most formidable confederacy against them that Europe ever witnessed. Under these circumstances, it became us to draw home and concentrate all our forces to preserve our constitution, and maintain our independence against the attacks of a vigorous and successful enemy. These successes were such, that they appeared almost to exhibit the effects of divine retribution. Let the House recollect the commencement of the war. Did they recollect the manifesto of the duke of Brunswick, which threatened Paris with vengeance and desolation? and now let them see its termination against that very power under the walls of Vienna, and the terms dictated by the power of a triumphant

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enemy.—The war had been matter for frequent discussion, both within and without that House; but, without doors, it was universally said, that it had been most grossly misconducted, and Mr. Burke had declared, that, even in that House, opposition had their opinions, and government their votes. To those who thought that the war was begun for the support of the old government of France, the West-India expedition must appear as a powerful diversion in favour of our enemies, and calculated to prevent the attainment of that object of the war. The island of St. Domingo was of great extent, and it remained to see, whether the means for subjugating that country were adequate to the end proposed. It might be asserted, that we expected great assistance from the inhabitants of that island; but of this he should say more hereafter. Another point of view was, whether our attempt of conquest in that quarter was not likely to create the jealousy of the naval powers, and particularly of Spain; and therefore, whether, instead of procuring their co-operation, they were not more likely to desert and abandon us? An additional consideration was, the actual military force in those islands. The commissioner Santhonax took with him 6,000 men, of those who were supposed to be the best republicans, namely, the national guards. In the island there was a force of 9,000, making, in the whole 15,000 disciplined men; add to these, 10,000 disciplined blacks, and a number of revolted negroes, to the amount of 40,000, who would fall upon either party, if they could do it with hopes of success, and were, therefore, to be equally guarded against as professed enemies. To meet this force, the first force under general Whitlocke consisted of 870 men. If, from circumstances, they hoped that so small a force could be effectual, at least, it behoved them to build those opinions upon good foundations. That the inhabitants would join them was an idle supposition, as would appear by an examination of the conduct of that island from the earliest periods of the French revolution.—Upon the summoning the states general in France, without any communication or orders from the then government, they chose eighteen deputies to represent them in the assembly. This showed that they were animated with the same spirit of liberty as pervaded their coun-

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trymen in Europe; and therefore it was not probable they would co-operate with men who opposed those principles. But although they desired liberty for themselves, they by no means wished to participate it with the people of colour, and hence arose much discord and tumult. Several insurrections were the consequences, one of which was headed by one Huge, who was defeated, and fled to the Spanish part of the island. He was afterwards given up by the Spaniards, and tried and condemned. He supplicated for a respite, and confessed that there was a scheme of insurrection, and that the republicans were all to be massacred. It was also generally understood, that the people of colour were to receive the countenance of the court of France, if they would delay their plans for a short time. The confession of Huge was for a time concealed: but afterwards it was known, and the royalists were branded with marks of disgust and horror. Was it, therefore, likely that we should receive co-operation, when we went expressly in support of those men and their principles? In the summer of 1791, a deputation of royalists offered to put that island under the protection of Great Britain, but as we were then at peace it could not be accepted; but when the war broke out, an order was sent to the governor of Jamaica to undertake the expedition. He believed the warmest partizans of liberty in France never meditated that excessive measure of giving freedom to the negroes. But could it not be foreseen, that France, in her own defence, would adopt every measure, even that of enfranchising the slaves? Accordingly, when the attack was known to be meditated, the commissioners, Polverelle and Santhonax, issued the proclamation, giving liberty to the slaves, which was afterwards confirmed by the Convention in 1794. The examination of the dates would prove that this measure was adopted as a measure of defence, and not upon other grounds. After the first essay, which was unimportant, the next object of attack was cape Nicola Mole. This was very strong towards the sea, but defenceless on the land side. At the time we were in possession of that place, every inhabitant left the town. This was another pretty strong proof of the temper of the inhabitants. The third object was an attack upon Tiberon. A Mr. Duval had promised to be there with a

force, and stated, that there was no troops in the place. Mr. Duval did not appear at the time appointed, and there was a strong force against us: the consequence was, that we were beaten, and a few days ought to have afforded us the salutary experience of the impossibility of successes with that force which we then had. The next arrival of forces was from Jamaica, leaving only in that island 400 men. In May 1794, forces arrived from England; but by that period the yellow fever had begun its destructive progress.—The hon. member then reviewed the progress made in the campaigns of 1794, 1795, and 1796, and maintained that they had been all ill conducted. The ravages by the fever were such, and the British troops died away so fast, that they could only act on the defensive.—Our situation now was, that after a four-years war, with the exception of Port-au-Prince, we only possessed three places, which we had gained within the first ten days after landing. This, indeed, was a strong argument in favour of withdrawing our troops from that island. Though we possessed the best harbour in the place, yet we by no means secured our trade, for no less than thirty privateers who had taken thirty or forty British merchantmen, were fitted out from an obscure port, and scarce a ship could pass between the Windward and Leeward islands without being taken. As to the produce of the island, scarce any thing could come, but what came from under the reach of the cannon of those places of which we were in possession. And as to the argument of the mischief we did the enemy, it was by no means a balance for our own waste of blood and treasure.—With respect to the expenses of that part of the war, it had gone on progressively increasing. In 1794 the bills were 296,000*l.*; in 1795, 772,000*l.*; in 1796, 2,211,000*l.*; and in January 1797, alone 700,000*l.* Ministers might say, that they had done all they could to prevent this expenditure. If so, it furnished a strong argument in favour of his motion, to prevent altogether the expense. The bills drawn for the large army on the continent, in the years 1794 and 1795, amounted only to sixteen millions, and those drawn from St. Domingo were four millions—nearly a quarter as much as were drawn from the whole British forces in Germany.—To talk of the civil establishment was a farce; and yet that had been made a system of jobs.

There was one man, an emigrant, appointed chief judge, with a salary, of 2,500*l.* a year, and who was so unfit for the office, that he was requested to retire, and now actually enjoyed it here as a sinecure. Great as the expense was, the loss of lives was a more serious consideration. By a return on the table, the deaths were 7,500, to the 30th of September last. Of these, a few fell by the sword; the rest by the pestilential effect of the climate, to which the English never could be seasoned. Some regiments lost 500, some 600 men, and some even more. In no place had the war been so badly conducted; and, as ministers had acknowledged the expense to be out of their control, the House ought to join with him in the motion with which he should conclude; namely, "That an humble Address be presented to his Majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to give directions that the British troops be forthwith withdrawn from the island of St. Domingo."

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, that it was impossible for him to remain silent under the general charges which had been laid to him and his colleagues—charges of which, if they were blameable, they were blameable in common with every administration and every minister entrusted with the conduct of military affairs, in every war in which the country had been engaged for the present century. Nothing he had heard could induce him to believe that it was the duty of administration, in any war, to abandon the interests of the colonies, and to employ the strength, which should be applied to that purpose, in expeditions of a different nature. If gentlemen would look back to our history, they would find that in no war which was well conducted, had such a principle entered into the minds of ministers; nor was there ever a war, in which it had not been held the best and wisest policy to direct our force against the colonial interests of the enemy, and to the protection of our own. Therefore, when gentlemen stated that the West-India war was criminal, because there had been a great expense of money and of lives, they were, in fact, uttering a gross libel on every administration which had ever conducted a war for Great Britain. For his part, he was old-fashioned enough to feel a stronger disposition to follow up the steps of his predecessors, whose good conduct had obtained the suffrage of the nation, than to adopt the new-fangled

ideas of peace or war, which he sometimes heard broached, let the talents or situation of the person who broached them be what they might. In the war of 1763, which no man would deny had a most glorious termination for England, how was our force directed? Against Canada, against Martinico, against St. Lucia, &c. The result was fortunate; while France had not been able in that war to make one West India conquest. Not only the persons who conducted that war thought that they directed the force well, but every one since had allowed it. The present war, upon which the epithet of "inglorious" had been so often liberally bestowed, was, in respect to West-India acquisitions, still more glorious than that of 1763, or any former war; for, with the exception of the island of Guadaloupe, Great Britain was now in possession of every one of the Leeward islands; so that as a war, in which we were contending for colonial interest with France, we stood, in point of success, in a more elevated state than ever. And as to the question, whether it was sound policy or not to direct our force to that quarter, he would, upon the authority he had already stated, assume that it was for the interest of the country to maintain our colonial possessions; and he would give this as an answer to the hon. gentleman who made the motion. At the same time, he would remind the House of the peculiar injustice with which he and his friends were treated on this point. When troops were first sent to the continent to protect Holland and the Netherlands, they were arraigned from the opposite side of the House for neglecting the West-India colonies; he begged of gentlemen, then, as they must attack him, to attack him consistently, and not at one time to attack him for neglecting, and at another for preserving the West-India colonies. No longer ago than last spring, a very heavy attack was made upon him, in order to prove that the West-Indies had been entirely neglected: he had proved to the House that the charge was groundless; and now he was called upon to defend himself against a charge of a directly opposite nature. The island of St. Domingo was the object of this day's attack, and an endeavour was made to prove that we should never have attempted to get possession of it; and, that having got a part of it, we should directly abandon it. If it was, as it had always been held to be, right policy in this country to make it the

principal object of any war to protect our own West-India colonies, and annoy those of the enemy, then so far the island of St. Domingo was a great object, not only to secure ourselves, but to lessen the maritime power of France; for, was it ever yet stated by any man, that it was at all to be doubted, that the naval power of France always rested almost entirely for its support and strength on their possession of the island of St. Domingo? When France had full possession of it, the exports of that island amounted to seven millions sterling; and the men employed in that trade were the foundation of the maritime power of France, and of its commerce. The island of St. Domingo alone produced one-third more than all the British West-India islands, Jamaica itself included. So that he was well warranted in saying, that the sugar trade of Europe was, by the possession of that important island, almost wholly in possession of France; and whatever afforded ground for trade, afforded also ground for maritime strength. Even in that solitary point of view, being engaged in a war with France, was he wrong to assume, that if it was possible to dispossess men of such a vast resource, it was the very best appropriation of the forces of this country? It was, in fact, a meritorious object, and was, therefore, of itself, a sufficient answer to the objections of the hon. gentleman.—But he had stated it too narrowly, when he spoke of the possession of St. Domingo as it affected the interest of France only: it was also intimately connected with the protection of our own resources, and of the maritime power which we derived from the possession of Jamaica. At all times, while a war subsisted between Great Britain and France, Jamaica was the object of our continual solicitude: for, from the contiguity and local situation of St. Domingo, as well as from the innumerable harbours with which the coast of that island is indented, it was always assumed as a fact, that Jamaica was in continual danger from it. Every soldier, therefore—every sailor—every ship that was sent to St. Domingo was sent to Jamaica. The hon. gentleman himself had admitted, that the harbour of Nicola Mole was of great use: it was, indeed, of incalculable valuable—a harbour which commanded the whole Windward passage would be allowed by every gentleman to be at least material to us. These were topics which were maintained in all wars,

and which he would maintain now. But it did not rest here—it was yet to be considered what the situation of St. Domingo was during the whole period of the war. The House would recollect, that long previous to the commencement of the war, there was a dangerous insurrection of negroes in that island, and lord Effingham, who was then governor of Jamaica, sent a force to it to protect the government of it from the insurgents. This insurrection, though it was checked from time to time, was never completely quelled; but that very circumstance justified the measure: for on our connexion with St. Domingo depended solely the safety of Jamaica. The House, in considering this question, would take into consideration, that in this war a policy unexampled was pursued. The French not only abandoned their own islands to insurrection, but promoted it, and endeavoured to make the negroes in all parts, and in our own islands, instruments to avenge them on this country. He put it to the hon. gentleman himself, whether, supposing every other reason out of the question, Great Britain could remain an indifferent spectator of a body of 5,000 negroes in insurrection, and possessed of uncontrolled power, in an island contiguous to their colonies? Was there any man who would agree, that if the negroes, being in that state, had been permitted to proceed, and gaining strength had extirpated the planters, Jamaica would be worth one year's purchase; or that the lives and properties of the planters of Jamaica would be safe? What saved Jamaica from the same sort of invasion as Grenada? St. Domingo was in our possession. Our first connexion arose from being importuned by the planters to take the island under the dominion of England. The question, then, to be considered, was this, Was it advisable to close with that solicitation? was it not matter of self-defence to prevent their being over-run with insurrections of negroes?—As to the mortality, the hon. gentleman had not gone so far as to charge any one with an intention of taking possession of an island that they knew would be fatal to the troops, for the purpose of cutting them off. But the House would recollect, that insalubrity was not the character of St. Domingo. Even when the yellow fever attacked the troops, it was not peculiar to that island, for it raged in every other. When sir Charles Grey went to St. Domingo the yellow fever did

not prevail. And governor Williamson wrote, that nothing marked the healthfulness of the climate more than, that no men had died in it, except two of wounds: after that, it was supposed that the contagion would cease, and the island be restored to its pristine salubrity.—Mr. Dundas then proceeded to show, that other administrations, and good ones, had sent troops on expeditions to a much more deleterious climate. To the Havannah, for instance, lord Albemarle went with near 12,000 troops, and between June and October 5,000 men were left dead there, so that there were more men lost in that one spot, in a few months, than in the West-India islands in four years of this war. Yet that war was reckoned glorious.—When, therefore, it was the effect of the possession of that island to bring down the maritime power of France, and save Jamaica from devastation;—when it was considered what the calamities would be, if a large body of insurgent negroes, murdering the planters, men, women, and children in St. Domingo, would extend their system of insurrection to Jamaica, and that this was prevented—would the hon. gentleman say that the cause of humanity would have gained any thing by our abstaining from taking possession of St. Domingo?—As to the expenses, considering the magnitude of the object, they were not great: the money had been laid out under officers who were instructed to be careful, and who he believed were so, and whose accounts were under investigation; but he must say that those officers were in a delicate situation—they had many things to plead in defence of not exercising strict economy, and would, perhaps, have reasons to give for the expenses, which forbid the House at this time from deciding upon the subject. It was rather unfair, however, to accuse ministers of a job, when there was only one person whose appointment was made in this country. Ministers, however, had given instructions prohibiting the expense of civil and military establishments in that island (excepting the garrison) from exceeding 300,000*l.*—But admitting, as the hon. gentleman did, that the harbour of Nicola Mole was the best in the West-Indies, could he be serious when he proposed to abandon it and leave the whole without protection to the people who had enabled us to make head against France; and to suffer the negro insurrections to ruin that island and

spread the same destruction to Jamaica? Or if it was even to pass from us to France, would it be adviseable to give up such a stake, which would be so great a material in negotiation? To show that it had not all the time been unproductive to us, he stated that in 1796, the part of St. Domingo in our possession produced a million and a half sterling and employed above 400 ships. Upon the whole, therefore, he must oppose the motion.

Mr. *Wilberforce* must dissent from the motion, though at the same time he could not accede to many of the opinions expressed by his right hon. friend. He thought him inconsistent in the main foundation of his argument; for at the same time that he took credit for acting, with regard to the West-Indies, on the established principles of former administrations, he acknowledged that France had conducted herself with respect to the colonial war on principles wholly new, by relinquishing all attempts at conquest in the islands, and being content to put them in that state which would make them useless to us. It was also inconsistent in his right hon. friend to regard St. Domingo as the source of so much power to France, at a time when, according to him, the previous regulations of that government had produced a state of universal desolation through the island. He thought the policy pursued with respect to the West Indies wrong. The old principles, however right formerly, were not adapted to the present times. The best mode would have been to secure what we possessed, by every means in our power to render our negroes satisfied, and to prevent the seeds of French principles by good usage. If with these we had farther strengthened the military force of each island, we should have pursued by far a wiser plan than vainly expending our strength on unattainable objects, and which, if attained, would never have been made permanent or useful.—As to the measure being a matter of defence to Jamaica, the fact alleged in proof of this by the right hon. gentleman did not bear him out in the conclusion; for though Jamaica was not infested by brigands from St. Domingo, as Grenada was from St. Lucia, St. Vincent's, and Guadaloupe, yet another reason might be assigned for that circumstance very distinct from the cause assigned. St. Domingo was rent with intestine broils, and there was no over-ruling French power sufficient to collect and direct the negro force. This was not

the case in the Leeward islands, where Victor Hugues with 1,100 men had, by landing in Guadaloupe and joining the negroes, been able to expel the British troops, and to organize and direct the whole black force of the Leeward islands. They were not divided as in St. Domingo, and, therefore, it was natural to expect that our contiguous islands would be attacked. The regulation and concentration of force that he recommended, had been found effectual in Martinique.—He could not forbear charging on the argument used in defence of government, another inconsistency. His right hon. friend had said, that he would rather the enemy should possess St. Domingo, than that it should fall a prey to the negroes. If, as he seemed to apprehend, the trade and maritime greatness of France was to arise principally from that colony, and that France was the principal rival of this country, how could it be more desirable that she should obtain the only means of successful contest? He conceived that the state of the negroes in the French islands had not been sufficiently considered. They were no longer like the inhabitants of India, too low for the storm that was passing over them: they stood erect, and influenced its direction. He could not see any reason for relinquishing what we were now possessed of in the island, though he thought the attempt to subdue it was unwise.

Mr. *Bryan Edwards* bore testimony to many facts stated by Mr. Dundas, as to the solicitation of the planters of St. Domingo, for this country to take possession of the island. The first offer which passed through him was in 1791, when this country not being engaged in war with France, government declined taking the advantage of the distraction which agitated her colonies. After the war broke out, this solicitation was renewed, and discretionary orders were in consequence sent out to sir Adam Williamson, who, from the representations of the French planters, in which he was, however disappointed, and the consideration that an attempt on St. Domingo might contribute to the defence of Jamaica, determined to make the attempt, though he could only spare 870 men for that service. The force on the island he stated at 3,000 troops of the line, the usual peace establishment; 6,000 national-guards, arrived from Paris, and the island militia 10,000; in all about 20,000 white men; to which were to be added a

black corps of 5,000. The 40,000 rebel negroes were not to be included, as they were adverse to both parties, and poured down occasionally against all the whites. What however was done, was done for the best, and the consequences of the attempt were to be attributed more to misfortune than blame. Cape Nicholas and Tiberon would give us the command of the windward passage, and these he thought might be maintained, though he was persuaded that all Europe could not prevent St. Domingo from being a negro colony.

Mr. *Fox* said, that it had been imputed to him, as an inconsistency, that he sometimes accused ministers of having sent too few, and sometimes too many troops to the West Indies. But it might very easily happen, that in one sense too few, and in another too many were sent. Disapproving wholly of expeditions to the West Indies, it was possible to think that sir C. Grey's was undertaken with too few men, compared to its object, or that the force being originally adequate, it became impossible to retain the conquests made, for want of sufficient reinforcements. So with respect to France; disapproving of expeditions there, he might, and certainly did think, that the force of those undertaken was far too small, and wholly inadequate to their objects. In all this he saw no inconsistency, no absurdity.—With respect to precedent, so much insisted on, he could not but think it a strange inference, that a war commencing in 1793, should be precisely conducted on the same principles with one ending in 1763. Yet such was the effect of the right hon. gentleman's arguments. Now he should have thought, that the conduct of the war should be regulated by his objects, and the probability of producing peace—the rational end of all war.—What might be the object of the war now he knew not, except that of getting out of it as well as we could: but most certainly in its commencement the avowed object was the destruction of the Jacobin government established in France. That was to be destroyed and replaced by some other monarchy, if possible. Government might have changed their object; but on these grounds the arguments adduced from Mr. Burke were irresistible; for supposing we had acquired every island belonging to the enemy in the West Indies, it would not advance us one step to our object of destroying the internal government of France. Thus, then, it appeared that ministers

availed themselves of that great man's principles to the effect of exciting that enthusiasm in France which had made her an armed nation, but had not adopted them sufficiently to follow those means which led directly to the object they had in view. Their object and their means were, therefore, strangely at variance. By their plan they rather seemed to have had no distinct object, and to have gone on expecting some fortunate occurrence to arise which never happened; and this he thought the most compendious and best defence for every event which had arisen since the commencement of the war. Though so many men were lost at the Havannah, it was on a single and successful expedition, the object of which was approved; the loss now complained of was systematic and useless. We expended our strength, not for the glory or chances of battle, but for a permanent establishment of no possible use, where the men did not fall in the animation or triumph of the fight, but fell useless victims to disease. As many indeed, had been lost on the continent in one battle, which he hoped would teach the world to find out some other way than that miserable one to terminate disputes; but in a battle, however great the loss may be, there is victory, or the chance of it, to repay the loss; but here the loss of thousands is wholly useless and inglorious. How must the sight of such an embarkation harrow up the soul! to behold men going, not to contest, not to contingent victory and triumph, but to recruit the gradual wasting of disease! What must be the feelings of those ministers, if they were present, on tracing the features of men destined to such service!—If all this was necessary for the defence of Jamaica, as had been said, let the House estimate the sum which this war had rendered indispensable for the security of that colony. Independent of the loss of lives, amounting, with deserters, to 9,000, the expense in bills drawn was near four millions and a half; and this wholly independent of the ordinary internal defence of the island of Jamaica, which must have been considerable. So it is, that the House and the country are drawn on from step to step. If in 1793, the first year of the war, when the sum voted was 4,500,000*l.* for the service of the year, he had stated, that so far from being adequate to all the services of the country, it would not be sufficient for the defence of one island, he should

have been charged with wild and extravagant assertion, if not wilful misrepresentation. But it seems, there is to be no more such expense, for the bills are to be limited to 300,000*l.*; yet an hon. gentleman had observed, that orders to the governor of Jamaica must be in their nature discretionary; and if so, what security did this assurance give? The enemy, they now learnt, were to be treated with attention, and even kindness; for the island was to be retained at a great expense, lest the negroes should spread farther desolation, although it was highly probable it was to be given up to France on the restoration of peace. He wished we had begun the war with the same attention to the enemy with which we were disposed to end it. He, however, thought it was exceeding all bounds of that good will which should not be extinguished to enemies, for this country, at so heavy an expense, to preserve a colony we were certain would be given up, and which at present was of no use whatever. Might it not, however, to avoid this dilemma, be evacuated as a military post to the French forces now in that island? He knew not if a negotiation was actually pending for peace; but if it were, he was certain this course would not have any injurious effects on the terms of it; and seeing no means to obtain the object but by the present motion, he should vote for it.

Dr. *Laurence* said, that he had never yet risen in that House, but when something which had fallen in debate, seemed in some way to apply personally to him, so far as to render it necessary that he should explain his sentiments. Some topics used by the last speaker, and one more particularly introduced by the member who moved the question, appeared to him to be of that kind. He certainly agreed with the right hon. gentleman, that the conduct of ministers in former wars, did not in itself form a justification for the conduct of ministers in the present war; and he fully concurred in the opinion which had been quoted; that menaced as we were by a new and enormous evil, so long as there was any prospect of directing the war effectually against the metropolis of the mischief, it would have been wise to have abstained from all distant expeditions, for the purpose of increasing our hostility in the quarter most material. The right hon. gentleman himself in the year 1782, had proposed at once to acknowledge the independence of America,

that we might pour down our whole force on the French colonies; yet, had he in the present war directly adopted and acted upon those principles, which he now hypothetically assumed as a ground of argument, he would not, in Dr. Laurence's opinion, have been inconsistent: he would have shown himself a still greater statesman.—But if three years ago it was right to depart from the military policy of all past times, it was possible that the circumstances of the existing moment, different from those which marked the commencement of the war, might make it inexpedient to abandon what it might have been better never to have attempted. Indeed, the question before the House was not, whether large reinforcements should be again sent to the West Indies with a view to conquest; it was not even whether we should maintain all that we at present possess there; it was simply whether we should voluntarily withdraw our troops, and wholly evacuate St. Domingo. He could not himself approve such a measure, either on the supposition that the war should continue, or that it should be terminated by the pending negotiation. The great importance of some posts which we occupy in St. Domingo to the safety of Jamaica and for the protection of the windward passage, had been forcibly stated by an hon. member, whose local information gave him peculiar authority on this subject. Yet with these advantages, he knew from his own practice in the admiralty courts, how difficult it was to check the depredations of the small republican cruisers, which swarm about the shallows of those coasts; and it should be recollected, that from the present relative situation of France and America, it might soon be the duty of this country to extend her protection to the commerce of the United States in that part of the globe. Would it, then, be prudent to give up to an enemy so active and desperate, places and positions of so much consequence, which having been once acquired and fortified by us, may now be kept with little comparative expense of blood and treasure?—As to our prospects from negotiation, it had been stated that we could only get out of the war by the willingness of the enemy to make peace. If so, it would be necessary to consider what that enemy was most willing to obtain by peace. On this point he referred to a report made in last June to the Council of Five Hundred, by Echasseriaux

the elder, who computing the whole balance of trade in favour of France before the Revolution, to be upwards of six millions sterling, takes credit for about seven millions as the value of the exports to the colonies, which during the war had become a total blank, as indeed had every other article in the commerce of France; and a large portion of that report is occupied in impressing on the public councils of his country, that it should be their leading object, whenever they can effect what they may think a solid and honourable peace, to restore their commerce by obtaining re-possession of their colonies. If this, then, was their avowed object in making peace, he thought it would be little short of madness to abandon previously and gratuitously that, upon which they set so high a value, and which, therefore, in treating with them would make so advantageous an article of barter, to consider it in no more elevated a view than as a mere merchandize for bargain and sale. He must also add, that such a surrender at the present moment, would in his eyes look too like a poor subterfuge to avoid a disgraceful acquiescence in the inadmissible preliminary demanded by the enemy, that the basis of all future negotiation must be their constitution and their laws; those laws and that constitution by which, while they annexed for ever to France dominions recently conquered from the house of Austria, they at the same time included as integral parts of their own territory, the very colonies and foreign settlements which had been from the beginning of the war in our possession.—But there was one consideration which must weigh down all the rest in the estimation of a British House of Commons: they could not agree to the motion without a violation of public faith, the planters of St. Domingo having been received into the protection of this country, and the French republic not having yet annulled those detestable laws by which they punished emigrants contrary to the very spirit and letter of their existing constitution in other parts of it; it would be both unjust and cruel to sacrifice those men to the dreadful consequences which would ensue by an abandonment of that colony.—He did not know whether it was in reference to this argument, that the right hon. gentleman who spoke last had asserted all the crimes and horrors of St. Domingo to have originated in the conduct of the white royalists. He would

not discuss that question now at large. Yet, he could not but caution the House against giving implicit credit to the assertion. Those afflicting scenes arose, according to all his information on the subject, chiefly from the machinations of a club at Paris, calling themselves the *Friends of the Blacks*, one of whose principal leaders was the abbé Gregoire; but the immediate cause of the first great devastation of that flourishing island was the impolitic decree of the 15th of May 1791; by which the National Assembly, unable to reconcile their colonial system with the metaphysical maxims of their revolution, sapped the foundation of both, by declaring the constitution of the colonies to be a necessary exception to general principles; took from the white colonists the privilege which they understood former decrees to have allowed them, of legislating for themselves and the other inhabitants of the islands; put the men of colour on an equal footing with the Europeans; and indirectly admitted the right of the slaves to liberty, though their enfranchisement was postponed from motives of prudence. And this sort of compromise between justice and policy, where a right is admitted and the enjoyment of it refused at the discretion of one, who can have no natural authority to be the judge in that respect, must always have a tendency to produce similar consequences more or less disastrous.—The actual enfranchisement of the negroes, which the right hon. gentleman had attributed to the hostility of this country, because it was not formally decreed by the French Convention, until 1794, Dr. Laurence considered as the inevitable result of the various contradictory laws passed by the first National Assembly, and the exertion of the club under Gregoire [Mr. Fox, however, having said across the House, that abbé Gregoire was not for making the negroes free]. Dr. Laurence mentioned some particulars which induced him to think differently; but he added, that it was of little importance, as Brissot and Robespierre were both active members of that club, and both warm advocates for the negroes, so that when they became the governors of the country, the measure followed of course.—He then mentioned some of the particular cruelties exercised by the mulattoes and negroes, during their insurrection in 1791. Men were sawn asunder between two planks; some nailed to gate posts, and their limbs

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gradually lopped away with hatchets; others fled alive to cover drums with their skins; and a white child stuck upon a pike, served the insurgents for a standard. The chiefs, in some instances, forcibly kept seraglios of white women; in others, they violated wives and daughters on the dead bodies of their husbands and fathers; and committed many other enormities, which no language can reach, sparing neither age, sex, nor condition. To the hazard, almost to the certainty of similar torments and intolerable afflictions we should deliver up the unfortunate colonists, if we should now precipitately withdraw from them that protection, which we had solemnly promised.—On the grounds which he had submitted to the House, he should give his negative to the motion, as contrary alike to the interests and good faith of the nation.

Mr. *W. Smith* lamented the mutual cruelties which had been practised by the whites and blacks on each other, and condemned the civil establishment of *St. Domingo* (of which only five parishes were in our possession) which, he said, nearly amounted to the whole expense which France was at, when it retained a much larger part of the island. He alluded to the causes of the revolution among the negroes. He thought, if the whites had, in the first instance, given way, all the subsequent horrors would have been avoided. He denied that the blacks alone were guilty of cruelty; and mentioned an instance where the whites having taken a mulatto chief, nailed him to a cart, dragged him through the city, then broke his limbs upon a wheel, and finally threw him alive into a fire.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. St. John - - - }	31
	{ Mr. William Smith - }	
NOES	{ Mr. Douglas - - - }	116
	{ Mr. Pole Carew - - }	

So it passed in the Negative.

Debate on Mr. Alderman Combe's Motion for the Dismission of his Majesty's Ministers.] May 19. Mr. Alderman Combe rose to make his promised motion for the Dismission of his Majesty's Ministers. He observed, that when he considered the magnitude and importance of the subject on which he had to request the indulgence and attention of the House, he found himself under the deepest degree

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of embarrassment. He was fully sensible of his own inability to do it that justice which it deserved; and could heartily have wished that it had been committed to the charge of those whose eminent mental qualifications rendered them so much more capable of giving to it that weight which he was conscious he must fail to do. A sense of duty, however, had overcome every objection, which the consciousness of his own inability had raised; and the recollection that he had received the instructions of his constituents, which he should ever hold himself bound to comply with, to bring forward this motion, had determined him to do so in the best manner he was able. It was, he believed, the general opinion of the people at the present moment, that the calamities which pressed so hard upon them, were in a great measure, if not wholly, owing to ministers having plunged us into the present war. He would not deny, that at the commencement of it the war appeared to be popular; but it had long ceased to be so, and he believed nothing had so much contributed to produce that effect, as the weakness and incapacity which ministers had uniformly discovered in their mode of carrying it on. They had, from the beginning, declared it to be both just and necessary. In both these points he had always differed with them. But even allowing, for the sake of argument, that it was so, it was but reasonable to expect that they would have produced, and laid before the public, some real or ostensible ground or cause on which it was entered into. Every private individual, before he quarrels with his neighbour, always looks upon himself as bound to assign his reason for so doing; and, surely, in a quarrel between two great nations, nothing less ought to be expected. If we look, however, to the conduct of ministers from the commencement of the war with France, it is in vain that we seek for any one fixed principle or motive by which they were guided. Sometimes it was for one purpose, sometimes for another; and to the present moment the country is equally in the dark, as it was at the first. It is needless to take up the time of the House by calling their attention any farther back than January 1794. The ostensible cause of the war at that time was said to be the restoration of monarchy in France. That form of government in France appeared to ministers so abso-

lutely necessary for the welfare of this country, that it was held out as a sufficient cause for all the load of expenses we might incur, and the whole catalogue of calamities which were likely to attend it, and which have ensued to so deplorable an extent. This cause, however, did not long remain to them. Events of the most melancholy nature rendered that ground no longer tenable. It was found necessary to choose a new one; and the next which was held forth for the amusement of the people, and for the justification of ministers, was "indemnity for the past, and security for the future." This was occupied for a considerable time, till at length it was, in its turn, obliged to be given up; and then we were bound to continue the war," till France was settled into some form of government, capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity." When that event took place, we were assured that ministers would not fail to take the earliest opportunity of entering into negotiations for a just, honourable, and permanent peace. In December 1795, it was determined that France had come to that description of government, which was capable of "maintaining the relations of peace and amity;" and a kind of overture was afterwards made, through the medium of Mr. Wickham, the success of which was too well known to render any farther mention of it necessary. Since that time the war had continued with every possible degree of misfortune and disaster to us and our allies. We were now left alone in the contest, and the distresses of the country had arrived to such a pitch, as to render peace absolutely necessary. It remained then, only to be considered, whether the present ministers, who had so rashly and improvidently precipitated this country into the war—who had shown such manifest incapacity and want of ability in the conduct of it—were by any means likely to be more successful in obtaining that desirable blessing, peace. He was perfectly of opinion with his constituents that they were not. He thought it absolutely necessary that men of greater minds, and more upright intentions, should be employed to bring about so desirable an object, and he would therefore move, "That an humble Address be presented to his Majesty, praying him to dismiss from his presence and councils his present Ministers, as the most likely means of obtaining a speedy and permanent peace."

Sir *W. Milner* said, that in seconding the motion, he was persuaded he followed the wish of his constituents, for the city of York had unanimously expressed their opinion upon the subject in the petition which they had directed him to present to his majesty. He was convinced also, that if the members of that House were to act as their constituents desired they should, they would, almost to a man, vote for the present motion. He verily believed, that unless the administration of this country was speedily put into other hands, the nation would very soon be undone.

Mr. *I. H. Browne* said, that before he could give his assent to the motion, it must be proved to him that ministers had done something for which they deserved to be dismissed. So far from that being the case, he was clearly of opinion, that the present administration had done more for the welfare of the country than any he had ever heard of. The worthy mover and seconder both of them thought themselves bound to follow the instructions of their constituents. For his own part, he had the honour to represent a very populous place. His constituents consisted of about 2,000. In returning him their representative they had done their part. They had elected him to act for them to the best of his judgment. That was his part, and that only would he act. If his constituents chose to instruct him, he should still pursue his own judgment, in spite of their instructions, in case he differed with them in opinion. If they were displeased at this, at the next general election, they might reject him if they pleased. He looked upon himself as a really independent man, and had never received or solicited any favour from ministers. With regard to the present ministers, he thought the country owed every thing to them. The three greatest blessings which a country could possess were liberty, internal tranquillity, and general prosperity. With regard to each of these no administration had ever done so much as the present. As to the first point, liberty, it was under the auspices of the present administration, that juries had received, unequivocally, the right which had been doubted of judging of all the circumstances of the case in point of law as well as fact. It was under the auspices of the present administration, and by their exertions even against very high and powerful authorities in that House, that the con-

tinuance of an impeachment had been carried. It was to the eloquence of the chancellor of the exchequer that that measure was chiefly to be attributed—he who of all other men might be most likely to be himself harassed by a long and tedious impeachment. It was by the present administration that the bill which was so obnoxious to the people of Canada had been repealed, and a lovely system of freedom had been substituted in its place. When sedition had some time stalked abroad with gigantic steps, an administration hostile to liberty would have taken hold of the opportunity, and endeavoured to contract her powers. But had the present administration done this? No; they had touched the subject with a lenient hand, and the bill they had brought forward for preventing and punishing sedition, they had limited to the term of two years. Though the most seditious meetings had been held which threatened, if longer suffered, the most dreadful consequences to the country, the present administration had not taken advantage of it to prevent meetings altogether, which they might have done. They had not prevented meetings for any purpose within the number of fifty; and by a lawful notice being given, any number of people whatever might meet for any purpose actually assigned in such notice.—Mr. Browne then proceeded to remark on the second point, tranquillity, which he said had always been so clear, from the excellent measures adopted by ministers, that it was unnecessary for him to go any farther into the subject, which spoke so plainly for itself. He now came to the third point, the general prosperity of the country, and on this he was certain no former administration could ever claim by any means, equal merit with the present. He would divide this head into two periods: the first from 1784 to 1792; the second, from 1792 to the present moment. In 1784, the present chancellor of the exchequer came into office, and from that time to 1792 no country ever flourished more, nor did this country ever enjoy so large a portion of general prosperity. By means of his great financial abilities, he raised the funds, which he found at 64, during the course of that period, to 97 or 98. In the same proportion with the funds, the trade, commerce, manufactures, agriculture, industry and ingenuity of the country kept equal pace in their increase of general prosperity, and the

country had arrived to the most unexampled height of happiness. The peace of 1783 was supposed and said to be precarious; but by the great wisdom of the measures adopted by the present administration, it was rendered not only permanent, but highly beneficial to the commercial and other interests of this country.—The other period to which he had now to allude, he was sorry to say was a painful reverse. Those political evils, however which had caused it, were entirely owing to the French revolution, which had suddenly risen to a head, and, like a swelling torrent, had burst every natural and artificial bound, and swept away all before it. It was worse than the first irruption of the Goths and Vandals, or any other savage nation that had ever been heard of. It threatened destruction to every civilized state and regular government in Europe. Much had been said, on the point of avoiding the war, and great blame was imputed to ministers for not doing so. He denied that it was possible to avoid it; and if it were, he was certain that by avoiding it we should have been placed in a much more lamentable state than we now were in.—Blame had been imputed to ministers for the expeditions which they had planned against the West-India islands of the enemy. This was also without cause. The want of success in that quarter was not owing to any deficiency of wisdom in the measures pursued, or the plans adopted. It might fairly be set down to the unfortunate circumstance of the yellow fever breaking out in Philadelphia, and being from thence conveyed to the West Indies, where it operated like a plague or pestilence, and made a climate which had been considered as salubrious in former wars, so pestiferous as to change the productive soil of every island into a hungry and universally yawning burial ground.—He contended that the war, though disastrous in some points of view, was absolutely necessary; and, taking it altogether, was the most glorious that this country was ever engaged in. Our trade had increased in a degree unknown in any former wars. The people owed every thing to the present administration for entering into it; for they had by that, and he believed by that alone kept the scene of action entirely from this country. It had ravaged and destroyed every part of Europe except this country. They had demanded the most dreadful requisitions of every power on the con-

tinent; and the grand duke of Tuscany had been obliged to sell his jewels in order to raise the last requisition of 100,000 crowns which they had levied on him.—From these evils we had been saved by the present administration. Would we change them for any other administration in Europe? No, he was bold to say. Could we change them for any other set of men in this country, who were likely to be of more service to its interests? He believed not. He knew well the great splendid abilities of several of the gentlemen opposite to him, and could wish they would act in union with those on his side; but he feared that wish was vain.—Mr. Browne then took an average view of the inclosure and canal bills, during four years before the war, and the same period since its commencement, and showed, that in the latter period they had greatly increased.—There was one point which he wished to observe upon before he sat down, and that was the great importance of the immediate preservation of tranquillity. This the present ministers had, by the wisdom and firmness of their measures, uniformly obtained. He was afraid that removing them would greatly hazard this important matter, and this was a powerful reason with him for opposing the motion.

Mr. Alderman *Curtis* said, that his worthy colleague had introduced his motion by giving the strongest assurances to the House, that he looked upon himself as always bound to act according to the instructions of his constituents. Yet his worthy friend had deviated from those instructions in the very wording of his motion. The instructions given by his constituents were, that his worthy friend should either make or second a motion for an address to his majesty to dismiss from his councils for ever his present weak and wicked ministers. Now, his worthy friend had left the words "weak and wicked" out of his motion, which plainly showed that he thought his constituents were wrong in so styling them. As to himself, he had candidly told his constituents, that he should act according to the dictates of his own conscience, regardless of any instructions. As, therefore, he did in his conscience think that ministers ought not to be dismissed, he should vote against the motion.

Mr. Alderman *Anderson* objected to the motion. He likewise at the last meeting had told his constituents, that his con-

science should be his only guide, on every occasion where he was to give his vote. But he denied that the instructions mentioned by his worthy colleague, were the instructions of his constituents. The meeting at the Common-hall which gave those instructions, formed but a small portion of his constituents. A declaration was drawn up and signed by a great number of liverymen, which directly contradicted the proceedings of the Common-hall. He believed there were many out of doors, who wanted to introduce anarchy and confusion. For this reason, he should give his hearty negative to the motion.

Mr. *Curwen* said, it was his opinion, that members of parliament were not only bound to listen to the instructions of their constituents, but to obey them. That House ought to speak the sense of the people, and unless they obeyed the instructions of their constituents, that could never be done. It had been urged, in favour of the present minister, that he had brought the country to an unexampled pitch of prosperity previous to the present war. He had, however, never heard any arguments that could convince him that the prosperity of the country was at all owing to the measures of administration. It had been said too, that ministers had, by the armaments they had wisely fitted out, prevented war with Russia and Spain. Perhaps, however, better measures might have been adopted for preventing those wars, than by armaments which cost so many millions to the country. But the present discussion should be confined to the period since the commencement of the present war. Ministers were highly criminal in refusing to take those steps by which they might have avoided the calamities of war.—It had been said of the side of the House on which he stood, that they always opposed the war with indiscriminate violence. They had, indeed, opposed it on the just principle, that no war should be commenced without endeavours being made to prevent it by negotiation. If ministers could not negotiate at the commencement of the war, why did they not take the opportunity when the armies of France were driven back within their territory? It was obvious that they could then have made peace upon better terms than at any other period of the war. Their neglecting to seize this opportunity of making peace was a sufficient proof to him that

they intended to interfere with the government of France. It proved that the war was a war of kings against the people. An hon. gentleman had made the passing of the traitorous correspondence bill, and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act, grounds of defence for ministers. It was extraordinary that these violations of the liberties of the people should be seriously urged in the defence of those who had committed them. From those two bills the country had experienced the most disastrous effects. Since they were passed, had not the navy been disorganized, and disaffection widely diffused? If the present system was persevered in, these discontents would increase, and would one day burst forth with an irresistible fury, which would bear down all before it. He was not for a change of administration, which should have only for its object the putting one man into the place of another. The country would gain nothing by such a change. The change must be total, not of men, but of system. The immense influence of government must cease: by that influence the right hon. gentleman had created about one-half of the present House of Peers. That exercise of the prerogative which the constitution had vested in the executive branch of government, ought not to be used for the purpose of undue influence. It degraded the dignity of the legislature, when men were raised to the peerage, not as the reward of merit, but of services to administration. The system which ministers had followed in Ireland, had reduced that country to a state of the greatest disorder. Nothing short of the complete emancipation of the Catholics, and a thorough reform in the representation of the people, could now prevent Ireland from being separated from this country. Indeed, in the present situation of affairs, it would be more for the interests of Great Britain, that Ireland should be declared perfectly independent, than that, by the impolitic and oppressive measures of ministers, the people should be driven to extremes which might prove far more injurious to this country. The present ministers could not be believed, make peace for this country; and, as the situation of the nation depended upon that blessing being speedily procured, he should support the motion.

Mr. *Bootle* said, he considered the Traitorous Correspondence bill to have been of great advantage to the country. It

enabled the government to send a great number of foreigners abroad, whom it would be very improper to permit to remain here in such times as the present. The bills too, which had been so loudly complained of, had in fact been the means of preserving the constitution. By these wise measures ministers had succeeded in confining seditious language within the walls of that House. As a proof that these bills were not thought oppressive to the people, he might notice the reluctance of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox), in bringing forward the motion he had so long promised. He had adjourned the motion for their repeal from week to week; and though he had fixed it for next week, the House had no reason to believe it would come on then. When a change of administration was suggested, it was proper to consider in what situation the country would be placed, if the right hon. gentleman and his friends were to get into office. These gentlemen had pledged themselves to bring forward a parliamentary reform; but they would find it very difficult to do this without throwing the country into confusion. There were two or three parties all desiring reform, but whose principles and views were very different. Would those who claimed universal suffrages be content to stop at the point which the lovers of moderate reform thought proper? While those gentlemen received the support of the most violent party, it was evident that that party expected that any reform which might be proposed would include their plan. He wished to know if gentlemen were prepared to go so far?

Mr. *Brandling* entered into a review of the conduct of his majesty's ministers during the war, and contended, that every possible measure which could be justified by human prudence had been adopted to promote the success of it. The navy of France had been reduced in an unexampled degree, and the happy exertions of this country had been unrivalled in any former period of history. The war was a contest between religion and impiety, between humanity and cruelty, between barbarity and civilization. It was a war in which the dearest interests of mankind were implicated, and in which the whole world was called upon to vindicate their rights against the usurpations of France. Nothing therefore could be so destructive as a change of administration at the present momentous crisis, when every real

friend to social order should unite with vigour and perseverance to obtain an honourable peace.

Mr. Alderman *Lushington* said, that he had viewed the commencement of hostilities in a very different light from several gentlemen, on his side of the House, who had merely argued in favour of a partial justification of the cause of hostilities. He felt himself warranted in considering the act of aggression on the part of the French republic against the Dutch, who were the allies of Great Britain, as a sufficient ground for war; but he would not confine himself to a minor cause, when others of a more cogent nature pressed themselves upon the conviction of the House. The defence of the war did not rest on the simple act of aggression, but had a more ample basis. It was undertaken for the purpose of maintaining that grand principle which preserved the happiness of the civilised world, and which prevented the encroachments of barbarity. Had France been contented to have confined to her own territories those diabolical principles, which it was her determined purpose to disseminate and establish in every part of Europe, Great Britain would not have been compelled to interfere. But France went farther, and threatened every neighbouring state with the destructive effects of those political tenets which her revolutionary doctrines inspired. It therefore became necessary to oppose a strong barrier to the dangerous principles openly avowed by the French republic. The war having consequently an object so very essential, had in a great measure accomplished that object; as those pernicious principles have been conquered by their own diabolical effect. He agreed that the treason and sedition bills were contrary to the spirit of the constitution; yet he thought it was wise, on that occasion, for the House to forego a particular part of the constitution to preserve the whole. The worthy mover had stated, that he acted in compliance with the instructions of his constituents. The constituents of the worthy alderman were also his; and whenever he received instructions from a great body of them, fairly assembled, he was always disposed to show them the utmost deference. But the meeting where the resolutions were entered into was not composed of one-fifth of the constituent body of the city of London. The pressure of difficulties arising out of the war

was admitted on all hands to be very great; but it could not be too strongly impressed on the minds of gentlemen, that those difficulties had not arisen from want of exertion on the part of ministers. The most probable means of insuring success had been uniformly employed. The disappointments which had taken place in the course of the contest had arisen from the line of conduct pursued by the king of Prussia, who professing to act for the common cause, had abandoned the principles on which he originally set out, and produced the most fatal mischiefs. Strong as might be the wish of any individual in the House or the country for peace, he was convinced it could not be greater than the wish of his majesty's ministers for the same desirable object. An idea had prevailed, that the people and the government of France were peculiarly hostile to ministers. But suppose the fact, that other ministers might be more agreeable to France than the present ones, were we then to change them? God forbid that France should ever dictate to us who were the fittest to negotiate, or that we should ever submit, through a mean and dastardly courtesy, to conciliate our enemies.

Mr. *M. A. Taylor* said, he should vote for the dismissal of ministers. He had watched their conduct for the last four years, and considered it both weak and wicked. When he called them weak and wicked, he meant that their measures were feeble and inefficacious, and that they maintained a system of corruption to a most alarming extent. He did not believe that civilization was the cause for which the war had been undertaken, but the restoration of the monarchy of France. Whatever the cause was, why had it not been published by ministers to the world? That the restoration of monarchy in France was the object of the war, was acknowledged in the protest of lord Fitzwilliam. But it had been asked, if you cannot trust ministers, whom will you trust? It might be supposed that he would answer, his right hon. friend (Mr. Fox), who had opposed all the acts of ministers, by which such misery had been heaped upon the country. Should we trust those who had led us into difficulties and dangers, to extricate us from them? A change of ministers, it was said, would lead to a change of system. It certainly would; but not a change in the constitution. Were he a republican,

and desirous of a civil war, he would not wish to change either the present ministers or their measures, for they would inevitably lead to general confusion and to the destruction of our monarchical form of government. In the arts of corruption, sir Robert Walpole was a mere idiot, compared with the present chancellor of the exchequer. It was said that ministers were desirous of peace. He believed they were, for he believed they were desirous of keeping their places; but this was no argument against their dismissal. It might have been used in favour of lord North at any period of the American war: it might be urged in favour of the worst of ministers. The House were desired to rely on the minister's honour. Whoever did so would lean on a broken reed. He was decidedly for the motion.

Mr. *Miles Peter Andrews* said:—Sir; I feel it my duty to give my negative to the motion, because I think, in these tumultuous times, this House would do well to discourage every proceeding which may tend to lessen the weight of due authority, or discredit the executive powers of the country. I am clearly of opinion that at this momentous crisis the measures of government ought strenuously to be supported. There are times, when party animosity and personal prejudice should give way; and I contend that this is one of those critical periods. It does not appear to me, that any sudden change of men, any convulsion in our political system, would essentially promote the tranquillity of the country, or accelerate the means of procuring peace; if it did, I would accede to the motion, for I hold myself perfectly unconnected with any party. Suppose his majesty should, in consequence of an address from this House, think proper to dismiss his present ministers—on whom must the nation rely for the guidance and direction of its affairs? Shall we find greater abilities, sounder integrity, or firmer minds among other gentlemen, than amongst the present administration? I think not; at least I am not inclined to risk the trial. Unanimity is the surest ground we can proceed on, to restore the peace, the happiness, and the prosperity of the country, and I will conclude with the words of our immortal bard,

———“Nought can make us rue
If England to herself will rest but true.”

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—I wish, Sir, to express my dissent from some of the pro-

positions laid down by the hon. gentleman who spoke third in the debate (Mr. Browne). The hon. gentleman observed, that the war was necessary, and unavoidable. In this idea I cannot concur. It is of little consequence which party first issued the declaration of war. My rights or my property may be attacked, and I may be the first to draw the sword; but should I on this account impute blame to myself? No, Sir. The question is not, who first published the manifesto, but who first commenced hostilities. According to my judgment, we were the aggressors in this contest; and I beg leave to state the grounds which have induced me to form this opinion. Sir, the prohibition to export even foreign corn to France, while it was permitted to be sent to other countries; the passing the alien bill with a view to exclude Frenchmen from our territories; the correspondence between M. Chauvelin and lord Grenville, the former of whom appeared as solicitous to preserve peace between the two countries, as the latter was to disturb it; and, finally, the dismissal of M. Chauvelin, which alone, in consequence of his official situation as ambassador, was, according to a treaty existing between France and us, to be considered as a declaration of war, these plain matters of fact, prior to the 1st of February 1793, the day on which the French manifesto against England was published, fully convince me that the cabinet of St. James's was determined upon a war with France, and that France on her part was amicably inclined towards Great Britain. But if any proof were wanting to convince the House of the pacific disposition of France towards this country, I might appeal to an occurrence in the winter of 1792. General Dumourier wrote to the Executive Council for leave to seize upon Maestricht, without which he declared that he could not defend the Meuse, or the territory about Liege. This city he proposed to keep in his possession during the war, and afterwards to return it to the Dutch, its owners. The Executive Council refused to comply with his request, because an attack upon the ally of England would give offence to England, and become a certain ground for war. For these reasons, Sir, I cannot but think that the administration were highly culpable for having so unnecessarily, and without the least provocation, entered upon a war with France.—But the

hon. gentleman was pleased to contend, that the administration had omitted no proper opportunity of making overtures of peace; on which point I differ from him. When M. Le Brun wrote to lord Grenville on the 16th of April 1793, to request a passport for M. Maret, who was to come with full powers to put, if possible, an immediate termination to the horrors of war, how was this proposal treated? Not even an answer was returned. What shall I call this conduct? Was it not the most childish arrogance? At the time of the defection of Dumourier, when the whole French army was in a state of disorganization, had you offered terms to France, must they not have proved most acceptable? Or might you not have negotiated with honour and advantage immediately after the capture of Valenciennes? When our armies and those of our allies had been successful, and ministers were on that account pressed to make overtures to France; "What," it was said, "when our military career is so glorious, and we are just within the grasp of the object for which the war was undertaken, would you dash it from you?" If in the hour of defeat and adversity ministers were urged by their opponents to open a door to negotiation, "What," it was replied, "would you have this country crouch to France? and would you deign to be content with such conditions as a haughty and ambitious enemy shall impose? Would you humbly solicit peace, when the terms cannot be otherwise than highly disadvantageous?" In short, Sir, with ministers no time was proper for negotiation. They were obstinately bent upon the prosecution of this disastrous war, a war in which they have expended 135 millions, in which they have laid upon the people annual taxes to the amount of six millions, in which they have shed a profusion of English blood, without having attained any one of the objects for which the war was professed to have been commenced. Was it for the protection of Holland that you drew the sword? Holland is not only no longer your ally, but is become the close ally of your enemy? Or was it for the re-establishment of monarchy that your armies took the field? You have been compelled to solicit a peace with the republic of France, to make a tender of reconciliation to the men who had imbrued their hands in the blood of that sovereign, whose death you were so desirous

to avenge. Did you engage in this crusade to prevent the dissemination of principles, which you anathematized as hostile to religion and social order? You have but added a fresh confirmation to the well-known truth, that force, instead of impeding, accelerates the progress of opinion. Has one of your menaces been carried into effect? Has one of your schemes been accomplished? Has one of your predictions been verified? You would march to Paris and seize upon the persons of the Convention—You are now preparing to defend your own coasts against the invasion of the same enemy. You encouraged the nation to prosecute the war, upon the assurance that the French were sometimes on the verge, sometimes in the very gulph of bankruptcy—but, alas! what is the state of our own finances! How low has our own credit been sunk by the discontinuance of the Bank of England to make its accustomed payments in specie; an event which no man can lament more than myself—"Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur."—To complete the picture, let us take a summary view of the conduct of ministers in the domestic government of the country.—Have they not extended the excise laws? Have they not erected barracks in every part of the kingdom, so that the soldier, while he remains deaf to the voice of his fellow citizens, is better able, should discontent find its way into the army, to concert measures with his comrades? Have they not, by the new treason and sedition acts, almost destroyed the liberty of the press, and nearly suppressed the voice of a people, who would otherwise be loud in their outcry against the grievances which the framers of these statutes have inflicted upon the country? Did they not for want of an early attention to the complaint of the seamen, change the humble note of petition into stern demand, and thus expose the country to a most perilous crisis? Do they not at this very moment, by resisting the just claims of the Irish, and pursuing the same system of coercion by which we lost America, run the risk of losing Ireland also?—Let me then appeal, in the most solemn manner, to the representatives of the people. Would you extricate your country from a ruinous war, and ensure to yourselves the blessings of a solid, honourable, and permanent peace? Address the king for the removal of his ministers. Would you repair your shattered finances, and support

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the tottering edifice of public credit? Address the king for the removal of his ministers. Would you prevent the dismemberment of your dominions, or, in other words, would you prevent the separation of Ireland from this country? Address the king for the removal of his ministers. Would you restore to its original beauty the defaced figure of your constitution, a constitution which is happily calculated to guard against the encroachments of monarchical power on the one hand, and the excesses of unmixed democracy on the other; would you, I say, give to the British constitution its pristine purity and splendour? Address the king for the removal of his ministers.

Sir *Gilbert Heathcote* earnestly wished that all party considerations might be set aside, when the interests of the country were at stake. Ministers might be called to an account afterwards, if their conduct was found culpable. But, at present, he thought it would be of a dangerous tendency to adopt the motion. No man wished for peace more than he did; but then, it was a solid and an honourable peace; and he did not think the removal of ministers the readiest way to obtain it.

Mr. *Dent* thought that, before the House could adopt the motion, it would be necessary to know who those gentlemen were to whom it was wished that the administration of public affairs should be committed. He lamented that in the course of the debate assertions had been converted into accusations, particularly when ministers were charged with occasioning the discontents and disorderly conduct of the seamen, and the disturbances in Ireland. Such circumstances were irrelevant and ill timed. He imputed no small share of the misfortunes of the country, and the late unfortunate shock which public credit had sustained, to the unguarded speeches within those walls. He did not believe that the country at large was so desponding as had been supposed; he rather thought the people were agreed to meet their present difficulties, and even encounter greater, and, if possible, to remove them, as far as individual efforts could avail. Why, he would ask, should the national difficulties be magnified in that House, for no other apparent reason than to increase despondency? even if the Bank should not pay in cash, after the 24th of June next, the inconveniences to the public would not equal those which had been

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already experienced. There was nothing the country had more to be afraid of than the effect of the inflammatory speeches delivered in that House.

Mr. *N. Jeffreys* said, that in voting for the motion, he adopted the sense of his constituents. He would answer one question, by asking another. It had been demanded, if the present ministers were dismissed, where were others to be found to fill up their places? To this he thought it a sufficient reply to ask, if the present ministers were dismissed, where would it be possible to find worse?

Mr. *Ellison* said, he would always listen to the instructions of his constituents with deference, but at the same time claim the privilege of acting from his own opinion. He spurned at the insinuation that those who voted for ministers did it because of the places they had to give. For his part, he felt himself independent; he neither wanted place nor pension. He loved liberty and the constitution, and would vote accordingly. He would not ask ministers to preserve these blessings, for it was the duty of that House to preserve them. He had thought the war necessary in its origin, and now he believed that nothing would tend sooner to restore peace than unanimity in that House. Could this be obtained, he believed little more time would be wanted to enjoy this blessing, than what would be required for a messenger to go from London to Paris. He could not think this was the proper season for agitating questions of reform, and bringing forward charges against ministers: it would be like a man's attempting to reform his family, when his House was beset with thieves and robbers. Unanimity at home, and a decided bold front shown by this country, would be the best mode of obtaining peace.

Mr. *Sturt* said, that if any moment was favourable to the removal of ministers it was the present; nor could any measure be more conducive to the speedy attainment of peace. For what has been the conduct of those ministers? Have they not wantonly plunged the country in a war, the grounds of which they have been continually shifting; while they seduced the nation by pretended overtures of peace, in order to pick their pockets, to enable them to prosecute the war? How did they plan the abominable expedition of Quiberon? Did they not enlist the prisoners taken on the 1st of June, who

were notoriously and enthusiastically attached to republicanism? And for what service did they enlist them? For the re-establishment of monarchy in France. Could any conduct be more absurd? Can such men be held in too much contempt? At St. Domingo, have they not sacrificed millions of money, and the flower of the British army? And at home have they not occasioned the most dreadful calamity that ever befel this country—he meant the late disturbances among the seamen—by delaying to satisfy the just claims of those our gallant protectors? Of all these accumulated calamities, in his mind, the present administration were the cause. It was impossible that his majesty could choose worse advisers. So satisfied was he that they were the cause of the unhappy disturbances in the fleet, that if no member took up the subject, he himself would move an inquiry into it. We are laughed at in every country in Europe, for having so long entrusted the conduct of affairs to such incapable hands. But the time will come when the people will exact from them indemnity for the past, and security for the future; for if they continue much longer in office, they will reduce the country to such a situation, that his majesty must turn them out, or the people will turn them out of their own accord. For his part, from whoever came in, he should expect a reform in parliament, the want of which was the cause of all our calamities, and without which all their proceedings would be but a farce.

Mr. *Pierrepoint* said, he would vote against the present motion, for in his mind ministers were not criminal, but unfortunate.—Much had been said against the Alien bill, and Sedition and Treason bills; but had he been a member of the House when those bills were introduced—they should have had his strenuous support; for they had been productive of much advantage, and of no inconvenience; though much, which he must style imaginary mischief, had been ascribed to them. Neither political predictions, nor party views in the least influenced his vote. He had much to lose; and the motion now under discussion had a tendency to introduce confusion, and hazard to property; he was, therefore, led by interest, as well as inclination, to give a direct negative to the motion.

Mr. *Burdon* deprecated the tendency of the motion. There was nothing we ought more to guard against, at the present juncture, than seeming to yield to a momentary pressure, and to a spirit of despondency. The motion would tend to increase those pusillanimous sentiments, as it would frustrate unanimity, on which alone we could form any rational hopes of ultimate success. The dismissal of ministers instead of accelerating, would retard peace: and instead of allaying the present ferment in the public mind, would foment disturbances. Viewing it in that light, he must give it his decided negative.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. Alderman Combe - }	59
	{ Mr. M. A. Taylor - - }	
NOES	{ Mr. Charles Yorke - - }	242
	{ Mr. Wilbraham Bootle - }	

So it passed in the negative.

Debate on Mr. Fox's Motion for the Repeal of the Treason and Sedition Bills.]

In pursuance of the notice he had given,

Mr. *Fox* rose and said:—I shall not have occasion, Sir, to detain the House for any considerable length of time in stating the reasons that induce me to call their attention to the memorable acts of the last parliament, a motion for the repeal of which I intimated before the holidays; nor will it be necessary for me to say much in answer to the misrepresentations that have been made on account of my having delayed the motion so long. The circumstances that have recently occurred, particularly the measure of the stoppage of cash payments at the Bank, so totally engrossed the public attention, and engaged the time of the House, that I did not think it right to bring forward this discussion, and instead of deferring it by adjournments from week to week, I directly and openly announced it for the present period. I have never, Sir, had but one opinion of the two obnoxious bills, which, at the time they were passed, I conceived to be most portentous to the country. Every reflection that I have made upon the subject, and all the experience that we have had since they were passed, have served to corroborate my original feeling, and therefore it is, that I now rise to move for the repeal of those two laws.

With respect to one of the two bills,

that which came to us from the Lords, under the title of “a Bill for the better Preservation of his Majesty's Person and Government against Treasonable Practices,” I shall make but one or two observations, though every part of it continues to excite my heartfelt abhorrence. The first great objection to that act is, that it extends unnecessarily the statutes of treason, and carries them to a length by no means consistent with sound policy as to their avowed object, the king's safety, nor consistent with the tranquillity and constitution of the realm. The memorable statute of Edward 3rd, was found to be sufficient to prevent the crime of treason; and experience has taught us, that all the forced constructions that have been put on that statute have served rather to lower than to heighten its force. Its operation has proved that the life of the king is sufficiently guarded, and every extension of it beyond that great and national object has only served to take away the reverence which its simplicity excited in the hearts of the people. That simplicity impressed upon the mind a sanction which it was impossible to derive from intricate and nice constructions. The people saw, in its noble and generous frame, security for themselves; by the reverence in which it held the sacred person of their king, they saw that, for the security of his person, even the imagination of his death was provided against; and the law was so clearly defined, so short, and so simple, that no danger to the well meaning could be created by its operation. In the reign of Elizabeth laws were enacted for the preservation of her person and government, for which the turbulence of the times was the apology, but which no person could contemplate without indignation. In the period of Charles 2nd, similar suspicions were entertained of numbers of persons being disaffected to the government, and some severe and scandalous laws were enacted for the preservation of the king's person. What is the impression that these laws have made upon every person who has attentively considered the history of the times? That they were enacted upon a consciousness that the conduct of the government was such as to provoke disaffection in the minds of the people; and this must always be the effect of rigorous and severe laws. It was made highly penal to say, that Charles 2nd was a papist. Why? Because, in truth, he was so. No law would,

in the present day, be thought necessary for the preservation of the character of George 3rd, against the charge of his being a Roman Catholic, because any such charge would be too contemptible for notice. His majesty's well-known character is the best protection against such an imputation, and the very enacting of such a law would betray a consciousness that there was ground for the imputation. The laws of Charles 2nd were made in this spirit; they were received by the people, and have been received by posterity in this spirit; and such laws can never have any other effect than to excite similar suspicions, and to weaken the government which they profess to support. The only other part of the bill to which I shall allude, and which, in my mind, is very important, is the provision with respect to political libels. It enacts, that, upon a second conviction, judges may be enabled to inflict punishments of a kind so barbarous and inhuman as to shock the heart of man. When you look back to the judgments that have been past in former periods of our history, when you reflect on the prejudices and passions to which our frail nature is subject, when you think on the possibility that judges may be as servile, as corrupt, or as cruel in future times as they have been in past, you will, perhaps, be able to form a just estimate of the character of a law that enables them to inflict a punishment of so dreadful a kind for an offence so indefinite and doubtful as a political libel. You will think with me, that the punishment of fine and imprisonment is fully sufficient to the crime—if crime it be—of publishing the most extravagant political opinion as to the form of governing a community. If this bill had passed a century ago, how many men, whose estimable characters have made them dear to mankind, might have been banished to Botany Bay, and condemned by the barbarous sentence of an inhuman judge to the society of a set of beings whom vice had degraded, and crimes of every nature had expelled from all rational intercourse with man! Would not the writings of Locke, writings that have so greatly enlightened and benefited the country, have probably condemned their author to this horrible exile? But, without going back to a period so distant, can we deny that, in a period much nearer our own times, the violence of factious spirit might have hurried even judges of our own day to

the infliction of this detestable punishment if this law had then had existence? In the beginning of the present reign complaints were made of the atrocious character of the public libels then published, and in the heat and fury of zeal, prosecutions were carried on with a bitterness, upon which no person of moderation can reflect without shame and regret. Personal considerations mixed with the motives of public decorum; and though I hope they did not influence either the prosecutors or the judges, yet I submit to the House, whether the temper of the times was not such as to make it highly probable that Mr. Wilkes, upon his second conviction, might have been doomed to this horrid fate. I am not sure that our nature is so likely to be purified by public situations of trust and power, as to be superior to all base and malignant passions; and I am not sure but that, in the spirit of those times, Mr. Wilkes might have been the victim of a persecuting rage. I have not the honour of that gentleman's acquaintance, nor have I, in the course of our political lives, frequently agreed with him in opinion; but now that the intemperance of the time is past, I submit to the House what must be the feeling of every liberal heart at the idea of condemning a person of such high attainments, so dear to the society in which he lives, so exemplary as a magistrate, and who has shown himself to be so zealous a defender of the prerogatives of the crown, to a punishment so degrading and so abhorrent. And yet, if the law had existed, would it not have been executed? If it had existed but a few years ago, would it not have been executed in many other instances; if juries could have been found to second the wishes of government? Of the willingness of government to go to the full extent of this inhuman law, Scotland has given us an indubitable proof. Scotland was said to have had this barbarous law, though it had never been acted upon. It was asserted, that there a law existed of so barbarous a tendency, as to enable the judges to banish a man from all civilized society, and condemn him to live at the extremity of the earth with the most degraded of his species. I am convinced, not merely on the authority of the most learned persons of that country, but on the information that I have been able to acquire for myself, that no such law did exist in Scotland, and that those who acted upon it will one day

be brought to a severe retribution for their conduct. But the apprehension of the existence of such a law has displayed to us the character of our government, and proved that we have a ministry capable of condemning their fellow creatures to this monstrous punishment, for the mere exposition of tenets on government different from their own. They made it their boast, that by means of this law they had gained the triumph of political opinion, and the sacrifice of a number of human beings, of enlightened minds and of moral character, for the mere offence of carrying doctrines to excess—for I admit, that in some instances, they carried their doctrines to excess. The publication of political opinion; that was the crime. What was the punishment? Death, of the most aggravated, of the most procrastinated, of the most cruel nature. They were sent, not into banishment merely, but sunk and degraded to an association with villany and ignorance and crime; sent to a country where, possibly, their health might be affected by the climate; but that was little in consideration of the despondency of their own feelings. I speak of one in particular—of Mr. Gerald, whose elegant and useful attainments made him dear to the circles of literature and taste; bred to enjoyments in which his accomplishments fitted him to participate, and endowed with talents that rendered him valuable to his country, he, among others, was the object of this persecuting spirit; the punishment to such a man was certain death, and accordingly he sunk under the sentence, the victim of virtuous, wounded sensibility. There may be times of alarm when men, under the influence of terror, become insensible to the dictates of justice and humanity. It has been truly said, that no passion is so calculated to harden the heart, and to make it sanguinary, as great fear; and accordingly we find that the most inhuman tyranny has always had its foundation in the hearts of those whose actions condemned them to incessant terror. In a moment of alarm, real or artificial, it is not to be wondered that nations, as well as individuals, should be lost to the dictates of reason and humanity. Ministers succeeded in spreading an alarm over this country, under the influence of which they made Englishmen forget and forego their natural feelings of justice and humanity; but now that this time is happily past, I trust that we shall also recover our genuine

feelings, and that we shall not suffer an act to exist upon the statute book, so disgraceful to our criminal code, and by which, in some future moment of passion, new acts of horror, under the name of judicial punishment, may be perpetrated.

These are the two principal features of that act that merit your attention. With respect to the other act, for the prevention of seditious meetings and assemblies, without inquiring whether the rights taken away by that act were proper subjects of legislation, I may, at least, doubt the propriety of their being made so. The statute clearly affects rights which, in their very nature and essence, must have been antecedent to the power of legislation, and it is not merely a question of morality, but of the highest political prudence, whether rights that are principles, rights which make the foundation of the legislature itself, and without which no legislation can be legitimate, ought to be made the provisions of a statute. It is a manifest axiom in a popular government, that man has the fundamental right to state his opinion; this right must be recognized, since it was on the exercise of this right that the government itself was formed. Need I illustrate the doctrine? It is recognized in the Bill of Rights. No man will deny that the right of petition to parliament is as inherent to the people of England as the right of petition to the crown. Why, then, did not the Bill of Rights state the one as well as the other? Why, but because the one had been attacked and questioned, not the other: and it has been truly said of the Bill of Rights, that it only asserted the privileges which had been outraged; it did not enumerate all the rights which had not come into dispute. But it is said, that this is not the first instance in which difficulties have been thrown in the way of petition; and reference is made to the act of Charles 2nd, in which distinction is made between assemblies convoked by the sheriff, persons entitled to the elective franchise, and other persons. No argument, in my mind, can be so dangerous as that which raises distinctions as to the right of petition. To say that those only enjoy the right of petition who possess the elective franchise, is to bring it into danger; good sense would make the argument go the other way; for surely if any description of persons more than another ought to enjoy the right of petition, it is those persons who, having no vote at elections, have no

representatives in this House to whom they can directly apply, and who may be made the organ of their sentiments. But I deprecate and deplore these distinctions, since every class of the community ought to have this right secured to them, and be made as free to this privilege as to the air they breathe. This act is outrageous, because it throws difficulties in the way of the exercise of the right, and enables sheriffs to prevent meetings; and it has been proved, that since the passing of this act more refusals have been given by magistrates than in any former period. This has been particularly the case since recent calamities have disposed the country to assemble so generally to petition for the dismissal of ministers. Very extraordinary reasons have been assigned by some of them for refusing to convoke meetings. The sheriff of Suffolk refused, because the subject had been debated in parliament, and because he was going to London. Another magistrate refused, though called upon by a numerous body of persons, because he would not disturb the unanimity of the county. The power of dispersing meetings was as obnoxious as the refusal to convoke them. In the county in which I live, the sheriff, after putting the question, said, there was a visible majority of votes, but because he did not know whether they were all freeholders that were present, he refused to sign the proceedings, and give validity to the record. Another person on this capricious objection could not take the chair, because the sheriff had the power to disperse the meeting; and thus an attempt was made to defeat the petition in the county of Surrey, even under the colour of complying with the statute. In many other cases difficulties have been found that make it vexatious, and almost impossible, to exercise this right under the provisions of this act. It requires so much trouble to comply with all the provisions of the act, where the meeting is not called by the regular magistrate, that it is next to an impossibility to carry the exercise of the right generally into effect. In some instances, where zeal and perseverance had conquered every obstacle, inconveniences were suffered that would deter men on ordinary occasions from assembling. In Westminster, for instance, where the meeting was called in strict conformity to the act, the day of meeting was most unfavourable in point of weather, but it was found inconvenient to

adjourn, because they must have renewed all the formalities required by the statute. And what is the benefit expected to be derived from all this? Are provisions like these likely to alter the minds of men? Are they calculated to prevent communication, and stifle the opinions and discontents of a people? If it were a new and an abstract question, there might, perhaps, be a difference of opinion upon the subject; but, unfortunately, a book is laid open to us, in which we may read, in most legible characters, the true character and consequences of such a measure—that book is the kingdom of Ireland. In the year 1794 a Convention bill was passed in Ireland to prevent meetings of the people. What was the consequence? Ministers boasted of the success of the measure: they flattered themselves they had succeeded in preventing meetings; but I have now the authority of the parliament of Ireland for saying that what they had prevented publicly had been done in private; and that ever since the year 1791 meetings of the people had been held, which, up to the year 1795, were small and insignificant—small, because up to that time they still had the power of meeting in public, and discussing their grievances openly, and without reserve. Up to the year 1794, then, they were small and harmless—but then comes the Convention bill, that forces them into clandestine and secret meetings by midnight; then comes correspondence with the foreign enemy, and all the terrifying and alarming plots which the report of the House of Lords of Ireland has ascribed to the people of that distracted country. What deplorable ignorance of the human heart to think that, by a mere Convention bill to prevent the meetings without redressing grievances, they could make men forget by making them silent! What criminal ignorance to conceive that, by damming up a torrent, it would not force its way in another direction! But it seems that, as our act has not yet produced the same effects in England, we must not go for instruction to the sister kingdom. I see no sense in any such argument: human nature is the same in all countries; if you prevent a man who feels himself aggrieved from declaring his sentiments, you force him to other expedients for redress. Do you think that you gain a proselyte where you silence a declaimer? No; you have only by preventing the declaration of grievances in a constitu-

tional way, forced men to more pernicious modes of coming at relief. In proportion as opinions are open, they are innocent and harmless. Opinions become dangerous to a state only when persecution makes it necessary for the people to communicate their ideas under the bond of secrecy. Do you believe it possible that the calamity which now rages in Ireland would have come to its present height, if the people had been allowed to meet and divulge their grievances? Publicity makes it impossible for artifice to succeed, and designs of a hostile nature lose their danger by the certainty of exposure. But it is said that these bills will expire in a few years; that they will expire when we shall have peace and tranquillity restored to us. What a sentiment to inculcate! You tell the people, that when every thing goes well, when they are happy and comfortable, then they may meet freely, to recognize their happiness, and pass eulogiums on their government; but that in a moment of war and calamity, of distrust and misconduct, it is not permitted them to meet together, because then, instead of eulogizing, they might think proper to condemn ministers. What a mockery is this! What an insult to say that this is preserving to the people the right of petition! To tell them that they shall have a right to applaud, a right to rejoice, a right to meet when they are happy, but not a right to condemn, not a right to deplore their misfortunes, not a right to suggest a remedy! I hate these insidious modes of undermining and libelling the constitution of the country. If you mean to say, that the mixed and balanced government of England is good only for holidays and sunshine, but that it is inapplicable to a day of distress and difficulty, say so. If you mean that freedom is not as conducive to order and strength as it is to happiness, say so; and I will enter the lists with you, and contend, that among all the other advantages arising from liberty, are the advantages of order and strength in a supereminent degree, and that too, in the moment when they are most wanted. Liberty is order. Liberty is strength. Good God, Sir, am I, on this day, to be called upon to illustrate the glorious and soothing doctrine? Look round the world and admire, as you must, the instructive spectacle! You will see that liberty not only is power and order, but that it is power and order predominant and invincible; that it derides all

other sources of strength; that the heart of man has no impulse, and can have none that dares to stand in competition with it; and if, as Englishmen, we know how to respect its value, surely the present is the moment of all others, when we ought to secure its invigorating alliance. Whether we look at our relative situation with regard to foreign powers, with regard to the situation of the sister kingdom, and with regard to our own internal affairs, there never was a moment when national strength was so much demanded, and when it was so incumbent upon us to call forth and embody all the vigour of the nation, by rousing, animating, and embodying all the love of liberty that used to characterize the country, and which, I trust, is not yet totally extinct. Is this a moment to diminish our strength, by indisposing all that part of the nation whose hearts glow with ardour for their original rights, but who feel with indignation that they are trampled upon and overthrown? Is not this a moment when, in addition to every other emotion, freedom should be roused as an ally, a supplementary force, and a substitute for all the other weak and inefficient levies that have been suggested in its stead? Have we not been nearly reduced to a situation, when it was too perilous, perhaps, to take the right course? May we not be again called upon for exertions that will demand the union of every hand and every heart in the kingdom? What might not this House do, if this House had the opinion of the country with it? Do not let us say, then, that we are to increase the force of the country by stifling opinion. It is only by promoting it, by giving facility to its expression, by meeting it with open hearts, by incorporating ourselves with the sense of the nation, that we can again revive that firm and compact power of British strength, that sprung out of British liberty.

Sir, I will not trouble you with more on the subject. In proportion as you throw difficulties in the way of petition, you deprive yourselves of strength; you alienate every heart whose voice you stifle; you drive men to correspondence with foreign nations, when you debar them from corresponding with you; and this, if we may believe the report of the Irish parliament, was the case with Ireland. When she petitioned, addressed, and remonstrated, she had no power, but from small beginnings, that is small, until a Convention bill had passed, until a Powder

bill had passed, and all the other acts of insanity and rigour, she rose from small meetings of mere petition, to a concerted, armed, and embodied union of one hundred thousand persons. Good God! shall we not, speaking the same language, possessing the same character, struggling for the same constitution, take warning from the example that is set, and conciliate the people of England? Or shall we, with our eyes open, run upon our destiny, as antient fables tell of men devoted running into the jaws of the perdition to which they were doomed? Sir, the present times hold ~~on~~ examples too legible for mistake. If demonstration shall fail to work upon us, we are undone; and if any truth has been more strikingly illustrated than another, it is this, that you shall not touch the liberty of the lower classes of the people without making the higher orders pay a severe retribution. You shall not take away one privilege, you shall not diminish one right, without suffering ten-fold, fifty-fold, an hundred-fold yourselves. You shall not commit changes upon the people without changing your own power into weakness, your economy into profusion. These are the doctrines applicable to these times. As men become enlightened, they advance in liberty; in that career seldom are any found retrograde; and in proportion to their advances you must concede to them. It has been said, as an argument against the emancipation of slaves, that the negroes are not sufficiently enlightened for freedom. The French Mulattoes, it is owned, are more capable of enjoying it; and passing from them to the most enslaved nations of Europe; we see that the approach of light makes it necessary for the governor to acknowledge at length that they are human. But, shall the preposterous imagination be fostered, that Englishmen, bred in liberty, the first of human kind who asserted the glorious distinction of forming for themselves their social compact, can be condemned to silence upon their rights? Is it to be conceived that men who have enjoyed, for such a length of days, the light and happiness of freedom, can be restrained and shut up again in the gloom of ignorance and degradation? As well, Sir, might you try, by a miserable dam, to shut up the flowing of a rapid river; the rolling and impetuous tide would burst through every impediment that man might throw in its way, and the only consequence

of the impotent attempt would be, that having collected new force by its temporary suspension, enforcing itself through new channels, it would spread devastation and ruin on every side. The progress of liberty is like the progress of the stream; it may be kept within its banks; it is sure to fertilize the country through which it runs; but no power can arrest it in its passage; and short-sighted, as well as wicked, must be the heart of the projector that would strive to divert its course.—Mr. Fox concluded by moving for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the act passed in the last session, “for the more effectually preventing Seditious Meetings and Assemblies.”

Mr. Serjeant *Adair* rose to explain the reasons upon which he was induced to resist any motion for the repeal of acts which a great majority of the last parliament had been convinced were absolutely necessary for the preservation of tranquillity, and for the safety of the constitution—a necessity which had not yet sufficiently subsided to justify their repeal. His right hon. friend had admitted that measures of the nature of those alluded to were not unexampled in the history of this country, and the profound legal and constitutional knowledge of his right hon. friend easily supplied him with the precedents. He was surprised, however, to hear it said, that the precedents were infinitely stronger which had occurred in the reign of queen Elizabeth—a reign, doubtless, of distinguished felicity and glory,—and had been justified by the well-grounded alarms arising from the situation in which the country was placed. In reply to this observation, he was confident that little argument was necessary, as he was sure the feelings of the House must go along with him, and anticipate the answer. The situation of this country was infinitely more alarming in every respect than it was at the period alluded to. The state of the continent, and more especially the state of men's minds, and the principles which had gone abroad since the revolution of France, had held up an awful warning to mankind, and impressed upon them the necessity of stopping all attempts to shake the foundation of established governments, of supporting them upon the principles of liberty, and defending them by guards consistent with its preservation.—His right hon. friend had said, that a statute of Charles 2nd had made it criminal for any man to say that the king was a

papist, but that nobody would say so of the present king, because the falsehood of the insinuation was universally known. This, however, did not appear to be the ground of the distinction. Among all the imputations which had been laid against Charles 2nd, nothing that had ever met his eye in the history of England, proved such an assertion to be true. It was not because the king was really a papist that it was thought necessary to render it criminal to say so, but because such an insinuation was most calculated to alarm the people for their religious rights. Even now there would be found among the disaffected in this country, men who would be ready to say that the king was a papist, if they expected to produce that alarm and that jealousy which it was their wish to excite. With regard to some parts of the bill, his right hon. friend laboured under a mistake. The additional penalty did not apply to the general subject of libel, but stated and defined the particular acts for which it was to be inflicted. It was against that particular kind of sedition which, if followed by an overt act, would have amounted to treason, that the law applied. Had it gone the length stated by his right hon. friend, he should have reprobated it with the same warmth; but he would ask any gentleman to read the bills, to consider the nature of the offence, and say, if the punishment provided was too severe. The sentences which had been pronounced in Scotland were foreign to the present discussion; but he could not help advert- ing to an observation which his right hon. friend had made upon this subject. It was, that the persons convicted in that country had been sent to Botany Bay for crimes arising out of an excess of love for the principles of the constitution. Had not Skirving, one of those persons, been secretary to the British Convention? Was it excess of love for the principles of the British constitution that had led these men to adopt the language and the forms of that French Convention that had murdered their king, trampled upon the rights of the people, abolished the Christian religion, and set at defiance every principle of humanity and of justice? Was it love for the Constitution that induced them to adopt a resolution to resist an act of the legislature which composed that constitution? God forbid that such should be the conduct which the love of the British constitution was calculated to inspire! It was said, too, that the sheriff of Surrey

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refused to decide on which side was the majority, because he did not know whether there was a majority of freeholders; and if that really was the case, he did not see that the sheriff had done wrong.—But he would ask his right hon. friend to point out any part of the bill which prevented the persons present from putting any other person they thought proper in the chair. For his part, he contended, that such a step would not have been at all illegal under the operation of these bills. It was said, too, that men could not by the bills be prevented from communicating their thoughts. He would go farther, and say, that no bills could prevent such communication. But, would any man contend that no restraint ought to be imposed, or that seditious communications would have the same effect, or that the mischief would be as immediate, in the closet as in public meetings, where numbers of men were apt to be roused by inflammatory harangues, and where the acclamations which even the most wicked sentiments obtained, were calculated to work men's minds higher, and to call forth additional vehemence? He was sorry that this country had been compared with the sister kingdom: he hoped the parallel between them would hold but in few circumstances. But though it were chronologically true, as stated in the Report of the Irish House of Lords, that no direct correspondence with the enemy had existed prior to the year 1794, and the Convention act, was it fair to say, that the correspondence that had since taken place was the effect of that measure? The reverse of this had taken place here. The measures adopted here were different from those which the necessity of the case had been thought to require in Ireland, and the effects were more different still. Every man who had read the proceedings of that House, and had attended to the trials for high treason, must be convinced that a correspondence with the enemy had existed, and that none had existed since the measures alluded to had been adopted. If the measures in Ireland were the cause of the correspondence, he was equally warranted to say, that the measures here adopted had put an end to it. But he would ask, had the bills repressed or increased the discontent which prevailed in this country? The alarms which the proceedings of certain societies had excited had been very great, and the numerous meetings which had been held at different

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places went to objects little short of destroying the constitution. The consequence of these proceedings had been an attempt upon the sacred person of his majesty. Whether any good had been effected by the measures then adopted would appear from facts and observation. Those who before were turbulent, now, at least, were quiet. Those whom nothing could content, were prevented from propagating their mischievous doctrines. The additional discontent which the measures might have immediately excited, he believed to have been caused by the misrepresentations which had been given by those by whom they were opposed; and had they been as represented, he should not have wondered at the discontent, nor should he have wished it to be less. The discontent, however, had subsided, because men had read the bills, and found that no constitutional, no proper meeting for the discussion of any real or imaginary grievance was prohibited; that all meetings called by sheriffs, by mayors, or other magistrates, were excepted. The events of the few last weeks, indeed, plainly proved how ill-founded were those representations that described the bills as infringing the right of petitioning. That they had put an end to those daring meetings which had, previous to their being passed, been so frequent, was true; but that they had effected this desirable purpose by interfering with the proper exercise of the right of public discussion, or the right of petitioning, he should ever deny. His right hon. friend had asked, if any mischievous consequences would result from the repeal of these bills at the present moment? For his own part, he thought that infinite mischief would ensue. If we looked to the progress of French arms, and the progress of French principles and events that had lately occurred in this country, we should find cause of alarm. To say that our situation was not critical, was to talk presumptuously. The country could only be saved by the firmness of parliament; equally superior to the influence of ministers, and to popular clamour. At present to repeal acts which practically had been found to produce so much advantage, and were practically attended with no bad consequence, would be madness. He hoped, when the period of their natural duration arrived, circumstances would be such as to render them no longer necessary, and when that period arrived, parliament must decide. He

prayed God that such might be the case; and then no man would be readier to lay them aside. His opinion was, that it was not enough that any departure from the usual form of constitutional freedom was harmless—it ought not to be maintained if it was not necessary. To a certain degree, the bills were restraints, and therefore, whenever they ceased to be necessary, they ought not to be preserved; but that they were inconsistent with the Bill of Rights he would not admit. The prohibition was so guarded with exceptions, that no constitutional or proper meeting was forbidden; and even for those who were not freeholders, a legal mode of meeting was not prohibited, which could be called, if seven freeholders required a meeting, and stated the purposes for which it was intended. But it was said, that when thus assembled, they laboured under restraints. But was it an improper restraint that they were restrained from any propositions inconsistent with the fundamental laws of the kingdom, and from any proposition to obtain redress of their grievances, otherwise than by the legislature of King, Lords, and Commons? Against illegal and dangerous discussions the bills guarded; but they did not interfere with the real liberties and privileges of the constitution. His right hon. friend had said, that liberty was the guard of every government; and in this sentiment he cordially agreed. No government could be permanent unless founded on rational liberty; but he was equally sure of the converse of the proposition, that no liberty could subsist without order; nor could it be preserved without a strong and efficient government. Upon these grounds, therefore, he should oppose the motion.

Major *Elford* said, that when the state of the country, previous to the passing of the acts alluded to, was considered, in comparison with its state since that period, it would be found that they had been productive of the greatest advantages. Attempts had been made to disturb that order and tranquillity, without which no government could subsist. It was, therefore, full time for the legislature to impose some wholesome and salutary restraints. Owing to the extravagant opinions which had prevailed, and the fermented state of the public mind, those bills were thought necessary. If he heard seditious doctrines preached, and then heard that the chief magistrate had been insulted,

and a sacrilegious attempt made upon his life, he could not help connecting these two events in his mind, and considering the one as the cause of the other. If the legislature had not passed the laws which it was now proposed to repeal, he believed, before God, that the House would not have been now debating. There was, therefore, the most evident necessity for the passing of the bills, and the state of the country since they were passed had not been, nor was not at present, such as to warrant their repeal. He would ask any man, if he would have known that these acts had existed, but by reflecting upon the good which they had produced.

Sir *R. C. Glynn* said, he could not vote for the motion, unless he was convinced that the acts under consideration were, at the time they were passed, useless and unnecessary; and that circumstances did not exist which made them desirable to the majority of the people. He would not deny that these acts did, in some degree, shackle the rights of individuals; and that nothing but a strong conviction of their necessity should have induced the legislature to pass them. In considering this subject it recalled to his mind the alarming meetings at Copenhagen House, and the seditious speeches and proceedings at Chalk Farm, and in other parts of the country; circumstances then existed which sufficiently convinced him, that those meetings were not, as was pretended, for the purpose of obtaining a reform in the representation, but were an attack aimed at the constitutional government of the country. It could not be denied that the people had a right to look up to the legislature for protection against the insidious schemes of wicked and seditious men. On this ground, these acts were passed; not as the right hon. mover had insinuated, to oppress the people. It was now eighteen months since these bills became laws, and the right hon. gentleman had not alleged one instance of oppression he should therefore oppose the motion.

Colonel *Fullarton* said, he never had had much intimacy with the right hon. mover, and had differed in opinion, on all political questions, with him, since the commencement of the war. He had however, never ceased to admire his splendid talents; but if any thing could diminish his admiration of those talents, it was to see him throw them away upon such questions as the present. While he

made these observations, he wished it to be understood, that he was not one of those who opposed the extension of public liberty. He wished the liberties of the people to be improved, in common with every thing which was capable of improvement. Improvements ought to take place in every department; and if they were not promoted, "delenda" might be written upon London, as it had been upon Carthage. The motion was a tissue of that political web which the right hon. gentleman had been weaving for many years, and which was calculated to bring that House into contempt in the eyes of all Europe. At the commencement of the present war with France, when the demagogues of that country threatened to plant their tri-coloured flag upon the Tower of London, the right hon. gentleman endeavoured to persuade the House that we had no more right to interfere with the affairs of France than with those of Morocco. He allowed, that a country had no right to interfere in the concerns of its neighbours, so long as it was not likely to receive any injury from their proceedings; but if the dominions of the emperor of Morocco were as near to Great Britain as France is, and if he should venture to encourage attempts against the constitution of this country as France had done, there would then be strong reason for interference. When the Alien bill was passed, the right hon. gentleman had thought proper to reprobate it. He had considered it to be an idle pretence, held out to enable the government to extort money from the pockets of the people. The right hon. gentleman had proceeded in the same strain of misrepresentation with regard to the Jacobin societies of this country sending deputies to the French Convention.

Mr. *Pierrepoint* approved of the acts which were the subject of the present motion. He was convinced, that to them the country was indebted for its present tranquillity. He should therefore oppose their repeal.

Lord *Morpeth* maintained the policy and necessity of the bills, and opposed the motion, on a conviction that the outrageous spirit of disaffection, which prevailed through the country, required to be kept down. If they were necessary at first, which parliament had decided, on what grounds were they now to be repealed? Were the times so much improved, that these safeguards of the public

peace were to be destroyed, and we might implicitly trust to the good conduct of those who pronounced the constitution radically vicious, and sought to introduce French liberty and French principles into the country? He hoped not; and earnestly besought the House not to lay aside acts that had contributed to their security. This was no time for them to quit their entrenchments.

Mr. *Ellison* said, there were some gentlemen who had wished that this motion had never been brought forward. He confessed he was of a contrary opinion; for if there was a man in that House who was willing, at such a moment, to bring forward such a motion, he thought it better that the House should have a fair opportunity of expressing their opinion upon it. High as his opinion was of the talents of the right hon. mover, he could not but regret that he had deemed it prudent to make such a motion:

"Who would not laugh if such a man there be?
"Who would not weep if Atticus were he?"

The bills which it was proposed to repeal appeared to haunt the right hon. gentleman, like the evil genius of Brutus, while to them, we owed the tranquillity we enjoyed by day, and the repose by night. The right hon. gentleman had considered the repeal of these bills as necessary, for the preservation of liberty. He could not help exclaiming "O, liberty! under thy name what miseries have befallen mankind?" He was as anxious as any man, that the time should arrive when those bills might safely be repealed; and when that time did come, he hoped it would by the general consent of parliament. The present ministers had, in his opinion, been unjustly accused, of being hostile to liberty, because they were obliged to lay on it some temporary restrictions. If any particular member were lame of an arm for instance, would not his surgeon order it to be bound up, until it was restored? Some restrictions were certainly necessary; schools had absolutely been opened for the purpose of teaching sedition; the people were told that all government was tyranny, and that they ought to do what they pleased, and the present motion did not tend to eradicate those ideas. An hon. colonel had said, that the object of opposition was, to make the country contemptible abroad. He was inclined to think that the tendency and object of their conduct was to make parliament

contemptible at home. They were constantly told, that the majority were the slaves of ministers, and a few gentlemen arrogantly assumed to themselves all the patriotism in the House. This was a claim he would not allow. He hoped every gentleman around him would come forward and speak their sentiments boldly, and not suffer such insinuations to be made. He admitted that, in some things, he did not approve of the conduct of ministers; but then it should be recollected, they were acting upon a large theatre, and great allowances ought to be made. Gentlemen had constantly the words, "the country, liberty, and freedom," in their mouths, while they were actuated by "malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness" against ministers, and treated those who had not the talent of talking as the slaves of ministers. He was not one of those who either wanted a place or envied him who had one; and he was as independent of the influence of ministers as any member of the House. In considering the conduct of ministers, one broad question must not be overlooked. That question was, their good or bad intention. Great allowances were to be made. Success did not depend upon the justice of any cause. If it appeared that good was intended, his majesty's ministers ought not to be so severely censured, even though their measures should not in some cases have produced all the advantages that might be expected from them, or though, perhaps in some instances, they might have been to blame. Gentlemen ought not to have the arrogance to pretend to persuade the country that they were the only patriots in the House, because they were distinguished orators. As a true-born Englishman, and as an honest man, he would not permit the right hon. gentleman to assume all patriotism to himself. He invited the respectable and independent members of the House to form a broad and firm phalanx round him, and let them exclaim to their constituents, "Here we are, unbiassed by ministers, uninfluenced by faction, performing the duty we owe to our king, our country, and our God." The act it was proposed to repeal, had not sensibly diminished the liberties of the people. That constitution was surely the best which, upon cases of emergency, could preserve the whole by relinquishing a small part. These acts had been called severe; but he knew that if the law was severe, the government

would exercise it with lenity: but when severity was necessary for the preservation of the constitution, it was their duty to be severe. In fair weather the vessel of the state might be allowed to spread all her sails to the breeze; but when it began to blow it was necessary to take in a reef. It was wrong to disturb the minds of the lower orders of the people, by exciting in them ideas of rights and privileges which never could be of any service to them. The only happiness they ought to enjoy was, that which resulted from their following their daily labours with diligence and sobriety. While they did this, they would be perfectly comfortable. He was proud to acknowledge, that he owed his seat in that House, to his father's having been a virtuous and industrious man. He would recommend to gentlemen, instead of making their fellow subjects discontented with the station to which Providence had allotted them, to obey the government by which they were protected. Those politicians who cheated the people out of their happiness, were, in his opinion the worst of swindlers.

Mr. Fox in reply, said:—My hon. and learned friend who spoke immediately after me, has urged a good many general topics, and among others, after allowing that the country was in a critical situation, he has contended that it can be saved only by a proper exercise of the wisdom and functions of parliament. In this sentiment I perfectly coincide with him. I also agree with him in thinking, that it is not by despondency that its fortunes are most likely to be retrieved. But when he states that its salvation depends upon the House of Commons acting with a spirit of independence, equally free from the control of popular cabal and ministerial influence, those who rest its safety upon this ground, and yet do not despond, must have more faith than reason in their creed. An hon. gentleman has brought a charge against me of introducing malice, hatred, and envy into the discussion of this House. I do not pretend to say that I am entirely free from the influence of these passions; but I believe those who know me best, do not consider my character as most attackable on these grounds. I am also accused of arrogance by the hon. gentleman. I should wish to know what he means by arrogance. Is it arrogant for a member of parliament to propose the repeal of an act in one session which has been passed in another? Is it arrogant to propose that one parlia-

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ment should differ in opinion from a former parliament? If this is arrogance, away with all freedom of debate! Away with all the forms as well as with the spirit of the constitution! The hon. gentleman says, that it is not from talking continually of patriotism that men deserve the character of patriots. I have a great opinion of the hon. gentleman's talents and eloquence, and for his character I entertain a high respect. But though I cannot presume to put myself in comparison with him, or to think that any thing that comes from me will have equal weight with what he delivers, yet I believe I am fully as far inferior to him in the art of praising myself as in argument and in eloquence. This was a vice which I certainly avoided in my opening speech, nor do I know upon what grounds the hon. gentleman has preferred the accusation. No one ever heard me call myself a patriot either in this or in any other debate. It is not by assuming the name, but by a conduct worthy of it, that a man can justify his claims to the character. A gallant colonel was also good enough to pass some strictures upon my public conduct; and though he seemed to have come prepared to extend his observations to the subjects of this discussion, he stopped short after having expressed his sentiments upon the opinions I held, and the conduct I pursued at the beginning of the war. At the time when these opinions were expressed, and that line of conduct was marked out, he was generous and gallant enough, on account of the host of foes which I had to encounter, to spare me the pain of his attack. Being then almost run down by the stream of eloquence in the House, and of popular opinion in the country, he scorned to enlist himself under the banner of my adversaries. But now, when many have changed their opinion respecting the origin of the war, and I am not so singular as I was, the hon. gentleman bravely, gallantly, and heroically, comes forward in defence of the cause which he finds has lost some of its supporters, and much of its popularity. The hon. gentleman says he never has been acquainted with me; I am sure I was once happy in his acquaintance. He says, that my motion is a part of the system upon which I began to act four years ago. I confess it is a part of the system which I have uniformly recommended, of repressing sedition by concession, and of promoting the happiness and prosperity of the people by the extension

of rational liberty. If this is the system upon which I am accused of having acted, I plead guilty to the charge, and I agree with the hon. gentleman, that the repeal of the act named in the motion belongs to that system. It has been stated also, that this is an improper time for moving their repeal. But I should wish to know why it is improper? No reason, that I recollect, has as yet been assigned to justify the allegation. The same gentleman affirmed that my conduct has uniformly tended to render the country contemptible and insecure. If this, then, has really been the tendency of my conduct, as the measures which I have proposed have uniformly been rejected, the converse of the proposition must be true; and the country, in consequence of the principles which have been acted upon, and the measures which have been adopted, must be in a state of undoubted security! If this is its situation, so much the better; but if, according to my humble opinion, the country is neither respectable nor secure, I may be allowed the satisfaction of thinking that, at least, it is not owing to those measures which I have proposed, and which the House has rejected. A noble lord (Morpeth), who spoke upon the question, as he does upon every subject, in a manner which did him much honour, asked if this was the time for them to relax from their vigilance, and to sink into a state of security; or, whether they ought not rather to fortify themselves behind their entrenchments? I must however, tell the noble lord, that, by adopting this mode of reasoning, he begged the question. Allowing that there is just cause for alarm, it remains to be inquired, whether the bills which are the subject of this evening's discussion are fortifications and safeguards? The whole of my argument went to show that they tend to exasperate, and not to soothe the wound; to increase, and not to diminish the symptoms of the disease. The system which I have recommended is—that government ought to make partial sacrifices of power to secure the remainder, and to beware of encroaching on the liberty of the subject, lest the subject should be provoked to attack the prerogatives of the crown.—I said in opening this subject. “Look at Ireland.” I was answered by the learned serjeant, who desired you to decline taking any view of Ireland, but exhorted you to look at home; and then, in enumerating the advantages which he thinks has been produced by these bills, he instanced the

stop they have put to the correspondencies of certain societies in this country with France. I cannot conceive how that can be said to have been the effect of these bills; for that correspondence was antecedent by several years to the passing of these bills, at least the only correspondence of that kind that I have ever heard of. It was for that reason I asserted, that I knew of no discontents which these bills had put an end to. I was, therefore, surprised to hear that sort of merit attributed to these bills. The correspondence with France was over long before we heard any thing of these bills: it was a correspondence of which you now apprehend no danger, and therefore there did not appear to me to be any necessity of alluding to it; but the situation of Ireland is not free from danger; and it did appear to me to be necessary to allude to the state of that country when we had before us a question of policy, which has some similarity to the measure which we are now discussing.—The learned serjeant then proceeded to state that the bills in question were very much misrepresented. Some misrepresentation is, perhaps, an evil inseparable from any measure that is new. These misrepresentations have been magnified and misapplied; that which would have been a misrepresentation of the bills, after they were altered in the House of Commons, was a fair description of them when they were introduced; for we cannot forget the very material alterations that were made in them. He applies what was justly said of them at first, to what they were afterwards made, and then calls it a misrepresentation—a mode of discussing the subject, which I could hardly have expected from the well-known good sense as well as candour, of the learned serjeant. But he says also, that when the bills were read by the public, they were generally approved. I do not know how far that approbation extended, but I do know that there were associations entered into for the purpose of pursuing all legal means for obtaining the repeal. Of those associations it cannot be expected I should exactly know the number, but I can assure the House they were considerable, and highly respectable for character. True it is, they have not come to this House in a regular way to express their sense upon that subject; but it must be remembered, that the very nature of the the bills themselves contributed to render

any regular means to call for their repeal extremely difficult. I will admit, however, that these bills are forgotten by the public. Why? Because events have crowded around so hastily, that we have hardly had time to think sufficiently long upon any thing. But I am told, that I have endeavoured to make this House contemptible in the eyes of the public. I want to know on what the hon. gentleman who accuses me founds the accusation? I have not been at any public meeting to declare the opinion which I entertain of this House. Whenever I find myself in a place where that is necessary, I shall declare what I think of this House of Commons, and I shall feel no difficulty in doing so. And although I have been charged with arrogance this night, I feel as little difficulty in declaring that I do, for myself and for those with whom I have the honour of acting, invite the public to make a comparison between our conduct and that of those whom we have opposed in the course of the present war. I say we are arrogant enough to think that such comparison will be to our advantage. But the hon. gentleman thinks that the House of Commons have done their duty; although, by way of parenthesis, he stated that he thought in many points the ministers were to blame. How unfortunate it is that he has never expressed by his speech, or even once by his vote, the points upon which he was so convinced. The House of Commons, it seems, is a check upon executive government. It exercises a control over the expenditure of the public money. This is an assertion that comes from an hon. member who is offended with the freedom which is taken with this House after it has refused to censure the minister for making a clandestine and illegal loan to the Emperor; after it is notorious that the minister told us that eighteen millions were sufficient for the service of the year, and then we find that six and thirty are not sufficient. I want either understanding or credulity to keep pace with the hon. gentleman, when he says, that the House of Commons is a control over the executive government in the expenditure of the public money. I also want faith when he asks me to consider, that those only are patriots who act as he does, who vote always with the minister, although they see in his conduct many points that are to blame. But it is said, that the authority of parliament must be

supported—that it should be esteemed by the public. If it be so, the way to possess that esteem is not for the majority to praise itself, and follow implicitly the dictates of a minister, but to show its claim to that esteem by their actions; to be jealous and prone to inquiry, not confident in a minister, and careless of the tendency of his measures. It is contrary to common sense, that confidence should follow failure. The hon. gentleman says, that success cannot be commanded by human power. Certainly not; but is mistake a ground of confidence? Is misfortune a ground of confidence? Is failure a ground of confidence? If they are, then ministers are entitled to an ample share of it. But will the public allow that these are just claims to confidence? When they see that this House increases in its confidence in proportion as mistake, failure, and misfortune appear, they will be apt to think there is some cause, not avowed by this House, for the confidence they place in the minister.—But, it seems, this is not a time when you should tell the people they have any grievances—this is a country in which every person can gradually become rich by the exertions of his own industry. The hon. gentleman who spoke last hinted that to be his own situation, by the exertion of his ancestor. But I apprehend that this preaching of the prosperity of a few will not tend much to satisfy the many. To talk of prosperity to those who do not feel it, is not the way to gain converts. When you feel that the people are falling into a general despondency; when you feel that you are approaching a dangerous crisis, it is folly to attempt to disguise it. Is that a time for you to say to the public, “do not mind public business, mind only your own private concerns; retain confidence in that executive government which has brought upon you your present calamities, for they alone can save you from utter ruin.” Is that a time to preach to them of the propriety of their indifference? No. It is a time in which you should call upon them to join in the public concern. You should therefore not contract the sentiments of the people—you should expand them. I am sure you will never succeed by any theory however ingenious, that has for its object the silencing of the public voice. If you wish to get through your present difficulties, you must give to the people the advantages of popular government in sub-

stance, instead of attempting to amuse them with imaginary excellence.

Mr. *Cholmondeley* said, that to repeal these bills during the present critical situation of the country, would be to revive sedition. To them we were indebted for the preservation of our liberties, our constitution, and our lives; and viewing them in that light, he must give a decided negative to the motion.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Whitbread	-	-	-	}	52
		Mr. St. John	-	-	-		
NOES	{	Mr. Neville	-	-	-	}	260
		Mr. Pierrepont	-	-	-		

So it passed in the negative.

Debate in the Commons on the Mutiny of the Seamen.] Mr. *Sheridan* said:—I now rise to address the House on a subject, in my opinion as important as any of those who have of late occupied our attention; a subject which is, in my humble opinion in comparison of all others, deserving the most serious consideration and attention. Sir, I believe the idea which this House has formed of the motion I expressed my intention to make, has been founded on a mistaken notion. It was supposed that I merely intended to complain of a certain paper of a gross and mischievous nature, which had been published as a manifesto of the British seamen on board his majesty's fleet, and which contains some personal allusions to myself, but as I have been uniformly an advocate for the liberty of the press, and am desirous of preserving some consistency in my public character, I can assure the House, that, whatever personal invective that paper may display against me, those considerations would deter me from attempting any prosecution either of the printer or the writer. On the contrary, Sir, the proposition I had to make was of a conciliatory nature. I do not retract in the smallest degree from that opinion which I expressed upon a former occasion, that the perseverance of the seamen in a state of insubordination, after their demands had been complied with, was not to be ascribed to any change or revolution in the old characteristic of British seamen but must have been owing to misrepresentations and falsehoods circulated among them. That there should be men in the country capable of employing such misrepresentations and falsehoods is a matter much to be

lamented; but there is something consolatory in the reflection, that the mischief is not in the minds of the seamen themselves, but is the consequence of the arts and delusions which have been practised upon them. Sir, I hold in my hand a paper, which has been circulated with great industry among the seamen; it is a paper purporting to be an appeal to the British nation from the seamen on lord Bridport's fleet. This has been sent to Plymouth and Sheerness, where it has been circulated with the most fatal success. Sir, I did, on a former day, take the liberty of saying, that this paper, from the internal evidence it carries with it, could not be the composition of the delegates of lord Bridport's fleet; I am still of the same opinion: yet I confess there are certain circumstances of apparent authenticity about it, that I am not at all surprised the printers and proprietors of newspapers should have been imposed upon, and led to believe it authentic; and I have no hesitation in saying, I do firmly believe the seamen among whom this paper has been circulated, believe it to be the proclamation of the delegates of lord Bridport's fleet, and that they were well founded in point of fact, in the assertion that their grievances remained unredressed. I am, therefore, not surprised that they should have remained in a state of insubordination. The paper in question was printed at Portsmouth, by the printer who had been employed by the delegates, and the manuscript was brought to him from on board the fleet. If it was brought by the delegates themselves, they must have been grossly imposed upon; for throughout the whole of the paper, it is evident, that it does not express the sentiments of British seamen. The language in which it is drawn up, is more like the language of a circulating library, than that of a fore-castle. It is no more the production of a British seaman, than a British seaman is the enemy of his country. This paper purports to be an appeal to "A Loyal and Discerning Nation." It states the whole of the transactions which have taken place, and asserts that, notwithstanding his majesty's most gracious pardon, it was the intention of ministers to select and execute the seamen, who were the principal ringleaders. It states that schemes were laid out to sacrifice some of the brightest gems that ever adorned this or any other country; and that no sooner was that pardon granted, but in direct contradic-

tion to it, individuals were selected for the express purpose of sacrificing them to malice and private resentment. Now, Sir, when a paper of this description is circulated with avidity round our coasts, is it not fit that a clear contradiction should be given to it? Is it not necessary that a paper which has manifestly imposed on the understandings of British seamen should be cleared up to them, and its falsehoods detected? With respect to the calumny itself, it would be an insult to the understanding of the House, if I should suppose a doubt existed respecting it. I am no friend to ministers; on the contrary I think there is not a more determined irreconcilable and inflexible enemy to them and their system than myself; but to insinuate that they or any one of them could have possibly harboured such a thought as that imputed to them by this manifesto; that any one of them could have had such an intention after the pardon granted by his majesty to the seamen. If I could insinuate this, I should deem myself not merely an enemy of ministers, but of the country. Sir I cannot be suspected of complimenting the House of Commons. I have differed from them on almost all occasions, yet I think I may say that with respect to good will towards British seamen, its sentiment has never been different from my own. If ever man loved man; if ever one part of the people loved another, the people of this country love the seamen. The individuals of this House have ever loved the seamen, and in this respect have shown themselves the representatives of the people. Whatever has been at any period proposed in this House for the benefit of the seamen has been adopted, almost with acclamation. With respect to that part of the publication which relates to myself, I have but to recur to the style of it, in order to convince the House it never was the composition of British seamen. It runs, "Oh! Sheridan, Sheridan! if this be your mean opinion of British seamen, thou knowest very little, very little of seamen's sentiments." Sir, I certainly did say, if they remained dissatisfied after their request had been granted, and at a time, too, when the fleet of the enemy might be at sea—I did say, if after their demands were satisfied, they remained in port, endangering by such conduct the safety of the British empire, that it must be because they were worked upon, and their judgment misled by a species of

the foulest and basest treachery. The paper states farther, "What! accuse us of treachery, impute treachery to us! its principles we disavow." Sir, I appeal to the candour of any man, whether it was, in the remotest degree, accusing the seamen of treachery, when I said they must be the objects of that treachery which had been the cause of their delusion, if they continued dissatisfied after their demands were complied with? They could not have selected any individual on whom to make a charge of such a nature who so little deserved it. Sir, with respect to another observation in the same paper, "that the hon. gentleman thinking he had defeated the chancellor, attacked the poor but loyal tars," it is equally inapplicable to me. I wish the former part were true I wish to God I had defeated the chancellor of the exchequer. Sir, I cannot instance a greater proof of my endeavours to promote the advantage of the seamen, than that in 1786, in the seventh session of the then parliament, a gentleman did twice bring a bill before the House, which I afterwards renewed for the general benefit of seamen, and though the principles of such bills were objected to, they had for their object the redress of those grievances which have of late been the subject of complaint. Sir, I have ever been their friend, but never more so than at this period, in warning them against those artifices which have been practised to seduce them. When people tell them that the navy can be managed without subordination, they may as well tell them a ship can be managed without a rudder; they had better pull down the masts and the shrouds, and lay them on the deck, than listen to such representations. At the same time, Sir, it should be understood that there are no farther grievances, if any exist which we will not redress. It was my intention to have proposed a motion of a consolatory nature; but I am convinced ministers can have but one wish on the subject, namely, to restore harmony in our navy, which has been so unhappily interrupted. I shall not therefore press my motion. I thought it necessary to make these few observations, that an opportunity might be given of contradicting the contents of a paper evidently circulated with the worst intentions.

Mr. Pitt said:—Sir, as there is no motion before the House, I am certainly not called upon to address myself to your attention; yet on so interesting an occasion

I trust I shall be excused for trespassing a short time on the House. Sir, I do feel a sincere desire utterly unqualified either by the past or present hostility of the hon. gentleman to his majesty's ministers, to acknowledge the fair, candid and liberal manner in which he has discharged a great public duty. I deem it fair to say that the candour which has led him to communicate to ministers the motion which he had in contemplation, is entitled to the same candour on my part; and I have no hesitation in saying that the motion he had in idea was not in any degree liable to those objections which I conceived, when he gave the House notice of his intentions to bring it forward. I am, however, glad he does not think it necessary to press his motion, and for this reason, I consider his not pressing it as a proof, in his mind, that the objections to it were neither capricious nor light, and that this is not a question wherein difference of political sentiments can make ministers insensible of the merit of British seamen. He has not spoken too strongly of the partiality of this House towards British seamen, and that native enthusiasm by which it has ever been actuated to adopt whatever could promote their interest and advantage. The corresponding zeal of that class, to contribute to the safety of the empire, is inseparable from their character; and whatever the effect of those most criminal machinations which have been used to seduce the most valuable instruments of the public service at this critical period may have been, I am persuaded the native character of the seamen, the native character of the country, must triumph over those delusions and machinations. Sir, as to the authenticity of the paper, it cannot be necessary for me to take up the attention of the House on that part of the subject, after what has already been said by the hon. gentleman, and acquiesced in by the silent feelings of the House. Sir, if any one can have taught our seamen to believe that a thought could be harboured by ministers, after his majesty's pardon had been granted them, of retaining any recollection of these transactions, or of an intention to deduct, in the smallest degree, from that act of oblivion which was intended by such pardon, that person must have been actuated by the most diabolical motive. No, Sir, the pardon was graciously conferred, and meant to be strictly observed with respect to all those to whom it was intended to apply and God forbid that we

should be under the necessity of considering any exceptions to the general pardon meant to be granted.

Debate on Mr. Grey's Motion for a Reform of Parliament.] May 26. Mr. Grey rose, in pursuance of the notice which he had given, to move for a Reform in the Representation of the people. In bringing forward a notice of such a nature, he said, he laid his account, from past experience, in exposing himself to many uncharitable imputations. If, in their resistance to the destructive system of ministers—if in their endeavours to check them in their ruinous career—if in their efforts to control them in their profuse and extravagant waste of public money, he and his friends had incurred imputations of a wish to gratify personal interest and private ambition, and of a wanton desire to thwart executive government, they could not in the present instance expect to escape similar, or still more odious imputations. It was some consolation, however, that though their exertions were not well received in that House, the public might pass a different decision upon them; and to the public would the eventual decision belong. It might, perhaps, be deemed presumption in him, to call the attention of the House to the conduct of an individual so insignificant as he was. They would do him the justice, however, to allow that, in his propositions for a reform in parliament, he had never proceeded on any speculation of natural and imprescriptible rights. The measures which he had the honour to bring forward were founded, not on speculative, but on practical grounds. Both the speculative and the practical defects of the present system had been so largely discussed and so often repeated, that his labour on the present occasion was much abated without injury to the cause. His views, he repeated, had proceeded on practical grounds, and not on grounds of right; because no man could claim any particular form of government upon a ground of right. Here, however, he begged not to be misunderstood when he stated this proposition: he avowed that there was no man more warmly attached to, or who would more steadily support, the natural and imprescriptible rights of mankind—these were liberty and security; and when liberty and security were not properly guaranteed by any particular system of government, either in consequence of ori-

ginal or accidental defects, the people who lived under it, had a right to demand, either that it should be changed or amended. But, on the other hand, the advocates for universal suffrage, before they demanded that their plan should be adopted, were bound to show, that it was for the good of the people that it should be adopted. It would be also recollected, that he had never grounded his motion for reform upon the inequality of the present misrepresentation. Inequality of representation of itself he did not consider as a sufficient ground of reform. For instance he never had argued, that there should be a reform in the representation of the people, because Cornwall sent as many representatives to parliament as all the counties of Scotland together, and because there were some boroughs with a few houses and a handful of inhabitants, which returned as many members to the House of Commons as the opulent and extensive county of York. Though this sounded strange in theory, yet if it was not shown, that in practice, it was injurious to the rights of Englishmen, their defence was good, who contended that the nation, under its present system of government had enjoyed much prosperity, and a large portion of happiness, and who argued against the expediency of a change from the chance of endangering the existence of the system, and of giving birth to evils of a much more serious nature than those which were experienced under it.

Having thus stated his general principles upon the subject, Mr. Grey proceeded to inquire what was the end and the use of the House of Commons, and what was the present state of the representation of the people. When he considered what it ought to be, the questions naturally occurred, whether it had acted for the interest of the people? whether it had watched the conduct of ministers? whether it had controlled the executive government in its operations? and, above all, whether, in the exercise of its appropriate duty, it had been a faithful guardian to the public purse? When he considered what it was, suggestions of a different nature occurred. Instead of attention, he was afraid there had been negligence; instead of inquiry, there had been confidence; instead of control, there had been obedience; and instead of economy, there had been profusion. But if it had thus failed in its duty, and if misfor-

tures, numerous and dreadful had been the consequence of the failure, whatever difference of opinion there might be respecting the time and mode of reform, he was convinced there could be little or no objection to the measure, considered abstractedly. How, then, did they stand? It was now five years since he first made a motion for a reform in parliament.* At that time the country was described as being in a state of great prosperity, and the public were induced fondly to entertain the prospect of a prolongation of the term of peace. When he looked back, however, for thirty years; when he reflected on the wars in which it had been engaged, and when he reviewed the conduct of the different administrations during these wars; when, in particular, he considered the conduct of the American war, and the embarrassments into which the country was brought in consequence of the profuse expenditure which marked the administration of that period; when, moreover, he beheld a new æra arising in France, which threatened a great and momentous change in the political system of Europe—from all these considerations he was induced to bring forward a measure, which in his opinion, would tend to prevent those evils from again recurring which the nation had formerly had occasion to lament, and which might withstand the influence of new opinions. In a short time after we engaged in a war with France. Our prosperity was still stated to be undiminished. One campaign was to decide the contest, and the triumphant march to Paris was for ever to check the insolence of the enemy. A noble lord then argued for the prosperity of the country, from the comparative statement of our exports and imports, and concluded a most eloquent description of our increased resources with saying, that we had risen from the lowest state of humiliation and adversity,

“More glorious and more dread than from
no fall,

And trusted we might fear no second fate.”*

That argument he considered as deficient, because he did not advert to the causes which had produced that state of adversity from which we had just

* See Vol. 29, p. 1300, and Vol. 30, p. 787.

* The Earl of Mornington. See Vol. 30, p. 854.

emerged; and he proposed at the time a measure by which the nation might have been guarded against a second humiliation. Whether the remedy would or would not have been effectual, he knew not; but this he knew, that the remedy was rejected, and that the country was again reduced to a state of calamity which made the effects of the American war, when compared with it, trifling, and our situation after it enviable. If, as the noble lord contended, the prosperity of the country was matter of credit to the House of Commons, and if it was an argument against any change in the constitution of that assembly, the disasters which it had lately suffered, and the state of adversity to which it was now reduced, were to the full as good an argument either against its wisdom or its virtue, and in favour of a change of constitution. In stating the evils arising from universal suffrage, the noble lord instanced the government of France, under which that mode of election obtained, and the profuse expenditure consequent upon it. Here again Mr. Grey contended, that he had the advantage of the noble lord in argument; for if extravagance and prodigality were fairly charged as objections to the constitution of the government of France, would not the same objection apply with equal force to the profuse expenditure of public money in this country, the guardianship of which immediately belonged to the House of Commons? What, since that time, had been our situation? We had been reduced from a state of unparalleled prosperity, to a state, if not of despondency, at least of imminent danger and deep distress. Under the pressure of great and accumulated calamities, how had the House of Commons conducted itself? Had they shown either vigilance of inquiry or independence of spirit? Had they investigated the origin of their misfortunes, or checked ministers in their mad and ruinous career? Nay, the very reverse! In a war, remarkable only for misfortune, and distinguished, on our part, solely by disgrace, they had suffered ministers to go on from failure to failure, adding misconduct to misfortune, and madness to folly, without either investigation or inquiry. When attacks were made on the liberties and even the lives of the subject, the House of Commons did not interpose in behalf of freedom invaded, or innocence assaulted. When the shores of our sister kingdom were laid open and

defenceless to the fleets of an invading enemy, no inquiry was instituted into the cause of such gross and criminal neglect. When, by the mandate of the privy council, the Bank of England stopped payment, and a shock unequalled at any other time was given to public credit, the minister was absolved, upon his own excuses, from any kind of censure.

Having stated the effects of the system, it was needless to enter upon the mode of election. But, was it not notorious to every one, that men without holding any communion with the people, without either property or talents, merely by throwing themselves on the patronage of a great man, got seats in parliament, not for the purpose of consulting the good of the commonwealth, and defending the rights of the people, but for the purpose of promoting their own interest, by betraying the trust reposed in them? As a remedy for these evils, he proposed to alter the system from which they flowed. Had he implicitly followed the dictates of his own private judgment, he should have adopted the mode of moving for a committee to inquire into the nature and extent of the evil, and to have found out a remedy suitable and proportionate to it. Though that appeared to him to be the better mode of proceeding, when he proposed it before at different times, there was always one objection offered to it, which, on the present occasion, he was desirous of obviating. It was objected, "Would you loosen the confidence of the people in the present House of Commons, by acknowledging the defects of its constitution without proposing a remedy, by showing how it might be constituted better?" To obviate this objection, he should state the outline of the plan which he conceived might remedy the evil of which he complained. His object, then, was to obtain for the people, a full, fair, and free representation in the House of Commons. He wished to alter no part of the constitution. It was his desire that it, should remain as it had been established composed of King, Lords, and Commons. He did not wish to alter any thing which could remain in its present state consistently with the attainment of his object, which, as he before stated, was nothing more than a full, free, and fair representation of the people. He should propose, therefore, that the same number of members should serve in parliament as at present. He should propose that the country repre-

sentation should remain nearly upon the same footing. There were a few alterations, however, which he thought should take place. Instead of 92 county members, which there were at present, he thought that in future, in order to put an end to the inequalities that now existed, there should be 113. For instance, instead of two for the county of York, as there were at present, he thought there should be two for each riding; and so in other counties, where the present representation was not proportionate to the extent of soil and population. The next alteration which he submitted to the House, referred to the mode of return. In order to put an end to compromises, &c. he should propose, that each county or riding should be divided into grand divisions, each of which should return one representative. The only other alteration which he had to propose in the county representation, related to the qualification of electors. The right of election, instead of being confined to freeholders, as it now was, he thought should be extended to copyholders and leaseholders, who were bound to pay a certain annual rent a certain number of years. These were all the alterations which he had to propose in the county representation. The reform which he had to propose in the other branch of representation, was of a much more extensive nature. He should propose, that the remaining 400 members should be returned by one description of persons, which were householders. He did not conceive that it would be difficult in the present, as it had been found easy in other instances, to ascertain the various proportions of population in the different counties. He did not propose, however, that these proportions should be accurately observed, but that they should be regulated by local circumstances; for instance, that great towns, such as the metropolis, should require a greater number of electors to return a representative, than in places where the population was more scattered; otherwise the populous towns would obtain a too great local ascendancy. It was a part of his plan, that the country should be divided into different divisions, and that, if possible, one person should not be permitted to vote for more than one member of parliament. This scheme necessarily involved a great number of subordinary details, into which it was impossible for him to enter. In order to prevent expense, the poll ought to be

taken through the whole kingdom at one time.

This was the general outline of the plan which he had to propose. To state that it could obtain any thing like exactness at once, or that it was not liable to great difficulties in the execution, would be presumptuous and foolish in the extreme. But he flattered himself it was not liable to any insuperable or fundamental objections. Upon this plan, the land-owner would find his property suitably represented; the merchant would find support in the householders; and men of respectability and talents in the different professions, would find a fair door open for getting into parliament. The only persons whom he would wish to exclude from that House, were men who were neither possessed of landed property, nor engaged in commercial enterprise, nor professors of any particular science; but men who, without property, without industry, and without talents, obtained seats in the House of Commons by the influence of great men, for the purpose, as he had said before, not of consulting for the good of the people, but of promoting their own interests. If such as he had described were the situation of the electors, what would be the situation of the elected? They would hold their seats, not on the basis of universal suffrage, but of universal representation. The qualification would be so fixed, that no man, however mean, might not hope, by honest industry and fair exertions, to obtain a seat in the House of Commons. And he begged to say, that a man, arrived at the respectable situation of being father, and consequently master of a family, having given hostages, as it were, to society, as an assurance of his interest in its welfare, was not unworthy of a share in the legislation of his country. In order to carry this plan into effect, he should move for leave to bring in a bill, which he should not propose to pass this session, but which should be brought in, lie over for discussion during the summer, and be decided upon in the course of next session. There was still another topic upon which he had not touched, namely, the duration of parliament. If the reform in the representation was adopted, but not otherwise, it occurred to him, that the duration of parliament should be limited to three years.

Having thus stated the outline of the plan, there remained little more for him to trouble the House with. One objec-

tion had always been made to a motion for a reform, when he had brought it forward, namely, that it was an improper time to agitate the question. So far from this appearing to him to be an objection on the present occasion, that the time was one of the greatest inducements he had for bringing it forward. If he had had any doubts before upon this point, they would have been removed by the change which had taken place in the sentiments of many persons of respectability, who formerly disapproved of the substance of the measure, and doubted much its propriety, and whose support he looked for on this evening. But there were considerations of much greater weight. In what situation were we placed? In prosperity we were told, that there was no need for reform; and though the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) at one time contended for the necessity of reform, if we would shun the recurrence of the evils of the American war, he forgot his promise upon coming into power. At present, we were in a state which, God knows! was far, very far, removed from prosperity. He would ask, then, whether, in the present state of unexampled calamity, the country could go on in its present scale of expense without a check being given to those who had the direction of public affairs? If the present House of Commons had brought us near the end of our resources, what could prevent our ruin, but a change in the constitution of that House? When he looked abroad, and surveyed the face of Europe, there was no object which to him appeared so desirable to an Englishman, attached to the constitution of his country as a respectable and independent House of Commons, speaking the sentiments, and consulting for the interest of the nation at large. In France, a revolution had taken place; the principles, at least, in which it originated, whatever others might think of them, he should always defend. Stained it certainly had been with enormities, but ministers themselves had confessed that order was restored, and that they had asked pardon of God and man. For his own part, he entertained a sanguine hope, that, in the end, it would tend to the diffusion of liberty and rational knowledge all over the world. With this revolution, then, how ought the people of this country to be governed? The constitution ought to be restored to them; and when every abuse was reformed, the system

would leave them nothing to regret. If you look to Ireland, you find the affairs in that country were every day becoming more alarming. God grant that a convulsion may not happen, but it can only be prevented by measures of reform and conciliation. If such an event should unfortunately take place in that country, would it not be wise to prevent all ground for discontent in this, by removing in time every just cause of complaint? How was it possible that the House could possess the confidence of the people, after having brought the country to suffer disgrace after disgrace;—after being brought to the verge, if not into the gulf of bankruptcy, without witnessing one effort, on the part of its representatives, to wipe off the stains it had received, or to save it from approaching ruin? Was it believed that the debates in that House were conducted with a view to the public good? He admitted, for the sake of argument, that the side of the House with which he had the honour to act, were no more actuated than the other by motives of a pure disinterested nature; though, while he made the admission, his conscience acquitted him of the crime. Was it not in every one's mouth that the object of the one party was to keep their places, and of the other to supplant them? And if such an opinion was entertained, how was it compatible with respect?

These were the motives which induced him to submit to the House the motion which he should have the honour to propose. There was one other point, which was personal to himself, and upon which, perhaps, he ought not at all to trouble the House. As long as he held a seat in that House, he should think himself bound to perform the duty he owed to his constituents; but he considered it as unnecessary any longer to expose himself to that obloquy which he had sustained in acting the part which he found himself called upon to take in the discussions of that House. Seeing calamity succeed calamity, and that every effort of his had hitherto been ineffectual in stemming the tide of misfortune, he despaired of a continuance of his efforts being more successful. Though he should always be present, therefore, in future, to vote for or against any measures by which the interests of his constituents might be affected, after that night, he should not think proper to trouble the House with any observations. Mr. Grey concluded with mov-

ing, "That leave be given to bring in a bill, to amend and regulate the Election of Members to serve in the Commons House of Parliament."

Mr. *Erskine* said:—I rise to second the motion of my hon. friend; and though I might content myself with saying, that I rest upon the reasons and principles which he has so ably detailed, and which have always been mine also, yet I cannot, at this awful crisis, with propriety, pursue that course. The principles upon which we maintain the cause of the people of England, and, indeed, the universal liberties of mankind, have been so frequently and so scandalously misrepresented, that I owe it to the public and to myself to state distinctly the motives of my conduct. I will do it with firmness, and with a most fixed determination to follow up, by my actions, all that I shall profess. I desire, with my hon. friend, to remove from the consideration of this momentous question all vain speculations on theories of government. I recommend a reform in parliament simply upon the footing of the practical advantages which it is obviously calculated to produce, and its consistency with the genuine principles and practice of the British constitution.

Three questions arise for consideration out of the motion which has been made: first, Whether the House of Commons, in its present frame and constitution, fulfils the ends of its office in the British government, so as to render any change in it inexpedient? By the House of Commons, I desire not to be supposed to speak of this, or of the last, or of those long past, or that may hereafter be elected, but of any possible House of Commons in its present form and constitution. Secondly, Whether, supposing a reform in parliament to be necessary, the specific proposition submitted to the House appears to be salutary, practicable, and adapted to cure the evils complained of, so as to entitle it to the ulterior consideration of the House, in the form of a bill, to be brought before us? Thirdly, Whether, supposing a reform of parliament to be expedient, and the proposition made by the motion to be worthy of consideration, the present moment is seasonable for entertaining it? This last point is, indeed, a matter of the highest importance. The present is no common period, and pregnant with no common events. We are in a crisis of unexampled difficulty and danger, and we stand answerable to God

and man for that singleness of conduct which can alone avert our ruin. I observe, that this state of things is not only admitted, but loudly returned to me as a censure on the rashness of the proposition before the House; but I undertake to demonstrate, that if you would avert the calamities which threaten to overwhelm you, you have not a moment to lose in adopting the motion which has been made. Indeed, I am convinced this is the last moment that may be ever given you for deliberation. If you do not come to a vote this very night, which sanctions, at least, the principle of a reform in parliament, you will find that you have neglected an opportunity never to be recalled. You will find it come back to you in a shape which may disrobe you of the power of deliberation; when concession will have lost its charm, and authority its dignity, and when the voice of wisdom and deliberation can no longer be heard. This, however, is out of its place: I shall arrive at it in its order. For the present I will pursue my course.

I will offer what I have to say on each of these points in a very few words. In examining whether the present constitution of the House fulfils its office in the government, it is necessary to reflect what the office and character of the House of Commons really is in genuine theory, and in original practice. Its office is to balance the other branches of the government, to watch with jealousy over the executive power, which, for the ends of good and active government, ought to be strong and powerful, and to protect the popular privileges against the encroachments of aristocratic influence and authority. Unless the House of Commons be sufficient to maintain this character in its full vigour and purity, the popular branch of the constitution is cut off to every practical effect—the genuine principle of the government is lost, and the people have no more political existence than slaves who groan under the scourges of despotic power. That the House of Commons once fulfilled this office, is certain, and that all our liberties were secured and established by its constant exercise, is acknowledged. We recollect, with pride and triumph, the glorious exertions of our fathers within these walls, when tyranny was, century after century, combated and defeated, and the freedom of England, and of the world, established. It may be asked, wherefore

it is, that when the House of Commons, in its present frame, has so balanced the Crown, and so reared up the British government from infancy to maturity, we are called upon to restore it to its original purity and vigour, elected, as it is, like all former ones, in the happiest æras? It may be asked, why we stir upon such a subject, even in this crisis of dismay, when every moment teems with the most portentous events; when every succeeding day makes the evils of the former one appear like security and blessing: when, perhaps, we have not much longer to remain in a state of regular government—[A cry of "Order!" order!" from the Treasury bench.] Sir, I am not to be deterred by clamour from expressing the sentiments which press upon my understanding and my heart. Whatever the House may think of this language, I shall not be condemned for it by the people who gave it its authority. This is a moment when to conceal, or even to tamper with the truth from the affectation of delicacy or prudence, is to betray the country. Why is it, then, that in such a moment, the disgrace and danger of which no man can give adequate utterance to, do I stand up to require you to alter the frame of the House of Commons, thus admitted to have fulfilled for ages the purposes of its institution? The answer is plain and easy—the circumstances of our situation are no longer the same. Whilst the people of England were engaged in a struggle for their liberties against a powerful and arbitrary executive acting by prerogative, and not by influence and corruption, it was enough that there was a House of Commons.—Whoever sent the members, they had, when assembled a common interest with the whole body of the nation.—Common danger united them against the crown and they had nothing to buy off individuals from the performance of their duty to the whole. —When the crown could not buy this House, it was driven to curb its privileges. This made the House as one man, and the representatives of ten or of ten thousand, had the same spirit and the same interests on all political subjects.

If a principle so obvious required proof or illustration, we have only to look back to the struggles of the House of Commons during the reigns of the Stuarts. We there behold it in its genuine office and character; reflecting the image of

the constituent body; partaking all its feelings, and contending with wisdom and firmness against every incroachment of the crown. But human establishments are not made for immortality; they must change with the insensible changes in human affairs, or must perish by violence. The Revolution of 1688 was a glorious æra in the constitution of England: it established the true principle of all political constitutions in maintaining the immutable right of the people to correct its government; but, unfortunately, too little care was taken to guard against abuses in the government so corrected.—The formidable prerogatives of the sovereign were, indeed, reduced within the bounds of a just executive authority, and limited by the strict letter of the laws; but the terror and jealousy of the people were quieted by this victory, and the mild and seducing dominion of influence stole upon us insensibly in its stead, bestowing a greater and a more fatal authority than ever existed in the most arbitrary periods of the government.—The gradual creation of a mighty revenue, rising up amidst the glory and prosperity of the empire, undermined in a few years, that nicely poised constitution which unjust power, though exerted for centuries, had only served to strengthen and confirm.—The crown, instead of being balanced and curbed in this House, has, during the greatest part of this century, erected its standard within these walls, and thrown the privileges of the people into the scale of the prerogative to govern the nation at pleasure without any control at all—So far, indeed, is the House of Commons from being a control upon the crown, that it is the great engine of its power. The crown, by appearing to act with the consent of the people through their representatives, though, in fact, by its own influence, is enabled to carry on a system which the most absolute prince in our history could not have fastened upon England for centuries past. Taking this proposition in the abstract, who shall now be found to question it. The most celebrated commentators upon our laws have been compelled to lament it publicly in their writings on the constitution; and Mr. Justice Blackstone, with all his leanings to the crown, has fairly confessed that such a system could not have been intended by our patriot ancestors, who had struggled to curb the prerogative, but by an unaccountable

want of foresight, had established a principle more dangerous in its stead. So said the illustrious lord Chatham, the virtuous Sir G. Savile, and the learned lord Camden. So, lastly, said the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) himself; and he would not have said so in vain, had he honourably persevered in that glorious course which was the nurse of his fame, the pledge and promise of his youth to his country, and to the universe. I do not bring this to the memory of the House for the purpose of personal insult or mortification but, to add the authority of his understanding to the other great ones I have cited. It may be said however, that these great authorities were all reformers; and we know that the wisest men are sometimes seduced by their prejudices and opinions to push their observations beyond the mark.—Let me look, therefore, for a witness without exception: a witness to whose competency the present ministers can take no exception, and who as he abhorred reform, must be supposed to have disclosed unwillingly the disgraces of parliament. Hear his opinion upon the office of parliament, and the shameful departure from it in practice, and then let every man look into the glass of his own conscience, and let the House, if it can bear the picture, say, whether it be like us at this hour:

“Whatever alterations time and the necessary accommodation of business may have introduced, this character can never be sustained, unless the House of Commons shall be made to bear some stamp of the actual disposition of the people at large. It would (among public misfortunes) be an evil more natural and tolerable, that the House of Commons should be infected with every epidemical phrenzy of the people, as this would indicate some consanguinity, some sympathy of nature with their constituents, than that they should, in all cases, be wholly untouched by the opinions and feelings of the people out of doors. By this want of sympathy they would cease to be a House of Commons. For it is not the derivation of the power of that House from the people, which makes it, in a distinct sense, their representative. The king is the representative of the people; so are the Lords; so are the judges. They all are trustees for the people, as well as the Commons; because no power is given for the sole sake of the holder; and, al-

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though government certainly is an institution of divine authority, yet its forms and the persons who administer it, all originate from the people.

“A popular origin cannot, therefore, be the characteristic distinction of a popular representative. This belongs equally to all parts of government and in all forms. The virtue, spirit, and essence of a House of Commons consist in its being the express image of the feelings of the nation. It was not instituted to be a control *upon* the people, as of late it has been taught, by a doctrine of the most pernicious tendency. It was designed as a control *for* the people. Other institutions have been formed for the purpose of checking popular excesses; and they are, I apprehend, fully adequate to their object. If not, they ought to be made so. The House of Commons, as it was never intended for the support of peace and subordination, is miserably appointed for that service, having no stronger weapon than its mace, and no better officer than its serjeant at arms, which it can command of its own proper authority. A vigilant and jealous eye over executory and judicial magistracy; an anxious care of public money an openness, approaching towards facility, to public complaint: these seem to be the true characteristics of a House of Commons. But an addressing House of Commons, and a petitioning nation; a House of Commons full of confidence, when the nation is plunged in despair; in the utmost harmony with ministers, whom the people regard with the utmost abhorrence; who vote thanks, when the public opinion calls upon them for impeachments; who are eager to grant, when the general voice demands reckoning and account; who, in all disputes between the people and administration, presume against the people; who punish their disorders, but refuse even to inquire into the provocations to them—this is an unnatural, a monstrous state of things in this constitution.”

Sir, this is, in plain English, the degraded, disgraceful state of this assembly at this moment. There was a time, and it has undergone no improvement since, when the right hon. gentleman admitted this to be the truth. He admitted during the American war, what he now denies to

* See Burke's Works, Vol. 2, p. 287. edit. 1818.

maintain his own war. Does any man now doubt that the constitution of this House was the cause of war with America, of the dismemberment of the empire which followed it, and of all the portentous consequences which have since crowded in its train? It has been often said, that the American war was at first the war of the people. No doubt it was, as every act of government will be popular which does not proceed merely from the crown, but begins with the general sanction of the people's representatives. The crown secures all the men of influence, property, and consideration in parliament; and they carry the people with them until they are brought at last to their senses by calamity and impending ruin. My proposition, therefore, is, that with the management of our mighty revenue in the hands of the crown, and taking into consideration the manner in which the members of the House are elected, the House of Commons has totally lost its original office and character as a balance against the crown.

Sir, it is often, perhaps always, by the concurrence of accidents rather than by the operation of permanent causes, that the great events of the world are brought to pass. The seeds of reformation, which had been scattered in the ground by these great men, came up at first but slowly—but they were carefully gathered and re-sown by the right hon. gentleman himself. In the fulness of time they grew up into strength, and, but for his own fatal efforts would have then ripened into a glorious harvest. But “what a man soweth, that shall he reap.” It was in vain that the right hon. gentleman, at the head of a corrupt government, endeavoured to repress the doctrines which he had propagated himself. He sought in vain to extinguish the popularity of a reform in parliament, without which he had himself solemnly and deliberately maintained within these walls, that the liberties of this nation were undone. Unfortunately, however, he made the attempt; aided by the very corruptions, to the baneful effects of which he had himself opposed the reform, which he now persecuted. It was from this unprincipled opposition, and not from any republican contagion, that the spirit of the reformers acquired new energy and force. This was the source of all that bitterness with which they accused and reviled the late House of Commons. For this cause they despised, and

for this cause they therefore libelled the late parliament, because they saw it struggling to maintain its own corruptions under the auspices of the very minister who had solemnly declared them to be wholly incompatible with the very being of an upright administration—I do not overlook the danger of such a state of things. I feel as much as any man the inevitable ruin of every government which is suffered to fall into contempt and disregard with the people; but knowing that no such loss of authority ever happened from the beginning of the world, except when governments fell off from the ends of their institution, I feel in common with my excellent and enlightened friend who has moved the proposition, that the only cure for the evils which alarm government for its safety is, to make it what it has been in the days of our fathers, when it preserved the freedom of the people, and was crowned with the people's love and veneration.—Upon that sound principle my hon. friend brought forward his former motion in the year 1793, which I then seconded, as I am now doing the motion of to-night. We thought then, as we think still, that the only mode of giving a safe direction to a spirit turbulent in the demand of liberty, was to give to Englishmen the substantial blessings of their own government.—We thought and we think that the surest antidote against those visionary and dangerous theories which constantly spring up from the heat of revolutionary movements, was, and is, to hold out to the people the real advantages which the British constitution, in its native simplicity and purity, was ever calculated to bestow; to raise a standard, around which the lovers of English liberty might proudly rally, to which all wanderers from it might return, and which would secure allegiance not by terror, which always fails in the moment of peril, but by the enjoyment of solid and substantial happiness; by the return of mild laws, of personal security, and the enjoyment of the fruits of their own industry, which are now squeezed to the very husks by the grinding machinery of a crushing and overwhelming revenue—This proposition was, however, rejected (as the present to-night will be), and not merely rejected, but rejected with insult and contempt. The right hon. gentleman not contented with apostatizing from the principles he had once professed, resisted them in a spirit and language of the

loftiest pride and arrogance, which have since received their just rebuke in humiliation and disgrace—but, unfortunately, this once mighty nation has been also disgraced and humbled. The cause of reform, was to be, at all events, put down; and all who maintained it were to be stigmatized, persecuted, and oppressed.—This is the clue to every measure of government from that time to the present.—The reformers had mixed with their cause an enthusiasm for the liberties of France, and for that reason the liberties of France were to be crushed—But the insolence with which the mighty changes of the rising world were denounced within these walls, is an awful lesson to mankind—It has taught us, that there is an arm fighting against the oppressors of freedom stronger than any arm of flesh; and that the great progressions of the world, in spite of the confederacies of power and the conspiracies of corruption, move on with a steady peace, and arrive in the end at a happy and glorious consummation.—I have always thought alike concerning the French revolution, and I have not now to assume that tone in the moment of adversity in which France must now be spoken to by those who, from their vain defiance, have invested her with a portentous strength.—The object of ministers was, it seems, to maintain the subordination of the laws, to uphold public credit, and to maintain, as they styled it, the regular system of things. What has been the consequence? In the pursuit of this new mode of supporting monarchical establishments, they have absolutely changed, and are hourly changing, into republican establishments, the whole face of the earth.—In support of public credit, they have broke the Bank; and in pursuit of public order, and in maintenance of what they call the constitution, they are driving Ireland, as America was formerly driven, to seek for emancipation in the arms of France—and if the present system be pursued longer, I fear, that what Ireland is at this moment, England will shortly be. All this portentous scene is chargeable on the last parliament—No minister of the crown could have accomplished the ruin of the country without a compliant and corruptly-devoted infatuated House of Commons.—I maintain, that if upon the day that our former motion for a reform was rejected, which was about the beginning of the career of his majesty's ministers; I maintain, that if the most arbitrary and rapa-

cious tyrant that ever afflicted mankind by his ambition, had invaded and conquered England, he could not, consistently with common policy or prudence, in the disposition of what he had subjugated and appropriated, have lent so heavily upon all the springs of national industry, or so dried up the resources of posterity for ages to come, as the late parliament has done under the title of guardians of our prosperity—I maintain, that Gengis Khan would in wisdom have refrained from raising two hundred millions sterling upon this conquered island in the space of four years; and I maintain, that he could not have been so besotted as to have stirred up the conquered to revolt against his authority by arbitrary laws, by public bankruptcy, and a total proscription of that character of freedom which had for ages belonged to a people; and I maintain, lastly, that I believe the country would have died to a man rather than have submitted to what they are now sinking under, amidst that stupefaction and prostration of strength and energy which the baseness of corruption never failed to produce in the declines of nations, from the beginning of the world.—But the government which rests on no other basis, is not made for stability or duration. It interests no passion or affection, and is connected by no permanent principle with the feelings or interests of mankind. It stands for a season upon the mass of national subjection, shaking from time to time by irritated and indignant feelings which terror may suppress, but never can subdue or extinguish, till the moment of explosion arrives which suddenly overwhelms it in ruin: for know, that, in some new form or other, the original rights of mankind will surely be re-assumed, and the monuments of tyranny and injustice be overthrown [Here there was a loud cry from the Treasury-bench of "Order!"]. Gentlemen seem to be dissatisfied at the language I have employed, and at the catastrophe I have pointed out; but they should recollect, that it is the progress of their own system I have described—I deprecate the events to which it leads, and labour, therefore, to warn them while yet it is time to shun the precipice towards which they are madly rushing—I can take no interest in a new order of things.—All my enjoyments, and all my hopes, prospects, and ambitions, rest for their existence upon the present government.—All the fruits

of a life, of almost unexampled labour, are involved in the fate of the country under its present system.—The security of all I possess is connected with the stability of the constitution: and this is the best pledge of my sincerity.—The disgraceful and living examples of many with whom I ought not to have compared myself, have nearly destroyed all other trust.

I come now to the second question: namely, whether the plan proposed by my hon. friend is likely to produce the practical benefits we desire, and the farther examination of the House. My hon. friend, with that manliness and candour which characterize him, explained distinctly the principle upon which his plan was to proceed.—He did not lay himself out to catch a prevailing cry by the flattery of any favourite theory, but rested his measure wholly and absolutely on the practical advantages it was fitted to produce—I object, as he does, to universal suffrage, as tending to defeat the very object it wishes to promote—I object to it likewise, when claimed as a right.—Mankind have a right to be well governed: but for that very reason; it follows, they can have no right to insist upon any particular mode which, in practice, may be found to be inconsistent with the very end proposed.—The system of universal suffrage would throw into the hands of some individuals a dangerous preponderance.—One man employing a great number of persons might, by influencing their conduct, unite in himself, perhaps, a thousand votes, and thus destroy the freedom of election. Yet, though I disapprove so unqualified a system as that of universal suffrage, I am desirous that a larger body of individuals should be admitted to a political interest in the state.—The House of Commons should emanate from the people.—The plan of my hon. friend attains this object with the most perfect safety.—The representation of land will continue; only it will be more widely diffused, and extend itself more equally.—No good reason can now be assigned for excluding copyholders from the right of voting; their estates only differ from freeholds in the mode of conveyance, and the privileges of lords are no longer what they were in feudal times: they are not privileges of property, but merely connected with authenticity of title.—Leaseholders of a certain value, and for a certain term, which amounts to property, are in the

same situation, and taking in, the inhabitants, householders paying scot and lot, through all their ranks and gradations, compleats the system of rational representation.—How can a people be better described? Are the balances of the state to be shaken by the representatives of all the lands and the inhabitants of all the houses in England, connected as they are with a thousand intersecting interests, with the public credit and stability of the government? Will you say that the masters of families, householders, every one of whom has some relation, some tie, some members of a little circle round his fireside, to whom he is attached, have no stake in the public fate, and are unworthy to enjoy political rights? Such a body of constituents would remove to a considerable extent the disgraceful practices which elections now exhibit.—Suffrages, it is notorious, are sometimes bartered for money, for a place, or a ribband, or for the most trifling and ridiculous considerations. To remedy these abuses—to remove all riot and debauchery—make the electors vote each in their particular parishes—they will then come with calmness to exercise the most important of political privileges, and consider maturely upon whom they are to devolve the guardianship of their civil rights. What is the vice and danger of the times in the opinion of those who rule at the present moment? Is it not a contempt of the authorities of government, and a disaffection to the parliament of the kingdom? What better cure can be suggested by the wisdom of man for that evil than to make the parliament emanate from the people, to make it the creature of their own creation? If they are prone to arraign the conduct, and to despise the authority of those in whose election they have no share, they will view in a more favourable light the objects of their own choice. The constituent will then entertain confidence in the representative, and the representative will feel some more regard for the opinions and the wishes of those by whom he is sent.—Who, then, is to raise up sedition against *such a government*?—As we lately had a national conspiracy without conspirators, now we must, in such an event, have a rebellion without rebels.—Such a representation would secure universal and permanent tranquillity.—It has all the advantages of universal suffrage without any of its defects.—It is, indeed, properly speaking, an universal right of suffrage, because all who are not included

in it may, without a figure, be said to be virtually and in substance represented—All the people in their various degrees, not included *personally* in such a representation, are members of some house or another; they are therefore represented in the persons of their fathers, or their nearest kindred, and bound in every feeling, as well as in every interest, which grows out of social existence, to support an assembly proceeding from such an universal national will: whereas the personal inclusion of every individual might, as I have already adverted to, give an undue influence inconsistent with the true spirit of independent elections—There is this last advantage in the mode proposed: it is a *practical* system, standing upon no other foundation but its aptitude to promote the practice and enjoyment of British government; whereas universal suffrage is argued to be an unalienable right. To be well governed, is a right unquestionably unalienable; but if that could be said of universal suffrage, then, as I have already observed, the right of mankind would be narrowed to one system and form of government; and however pernicious it might be found in practice, it could not possibly be changed, since no legitimate government can be built upon the usurpation or the restraint of human rights which are universal. In this way honest but visionary men, confounding the unalienable right of every man to be well governed, with a right unalienable to interfere in the administration of actual government, impose a tyranny upon the world in their zeal for universal freedom. The system proposed by my excellent and enlightened friend, avoids this dangerous stumbling block, and erects a practical government upon principles which have no tendency to disorganize society, or to shake the establishments of the country.

The last point of all, and certainly the most momentous, now stands in its order, namely, is the present a fit moment for making any alteration, however beneficial, in the constitution of the government?—My opinion is, that it is singularly and critically seasonable; and that those who seize upon the time as a foundation for objection, would lay the same hold on prosperity, if it were proposed on the return of peace. To try this, let us suppose that our situation were reversed; that commerce was flourishing; that our public credit was beginning to re-establish itself; that the winter of our affairs had

passed away, and the summer was beginning to re-appear—would it not then be said to the proposers of reform, what but mischief can be your object?—No sooner are the springs of industry again put in motion—no sooner are the sources of commerce unlocked, and pouring forth the riches of the country in every direction—no sooner has returning confidence in a reanimated government given a new impulse to every exertion of skill, and new directions to labour and ingenious industry, than you agitate your question of reform to set men mad upon theories of government, instead of supporting it by the peaceable enjoyment of its practical blessings, checking the rising prosperity of peace, and plunging us back into all the dangers and difficulties from which we had almost miraculously emerged. In this way the friends of reform would again be clamoured down, and stigmatized with new topics of reproach, enforced by all the new corruptions which peace would furnish, and in which the seeds of other wars would be again certainly deposited and ripened. Depend upon it the enemies of reform are unalterable enemies to it upon principle, and will find no time seasonable for its adoption. That which men are determined to oppose from a corrupt interest in abuse they will equally oppose at all times, and upon all occasions, as they happen accidentally to shift, will be alternately made use of as pretences.

But it is farther said, in objection to the times, that there is at this moment a dangerous disaffection prevalent in the minds of men to the government of this country, and that pestilent and destructive theories have poisoned public opinion against our monarchical constitution. There may, Sir, be many persons disaffected to government. [Hear, hear! from the opposite side.] I put the case which the gentlemen on the other side are so loud to give assent to; and though the existence of disaffection may be true concerning all governments in all times, yet I deny it to be true in the degree which has in this House been so repeatedly asserted. But admitting, for the sake of argument, that the imputation of widespread disaffection is just, how is the evil to be remedied? If despair of obtaining any moderate reform has driven any considerable numbers to republicanism, to whom is the fault to be imputed? Will any

man deny that the foundation of this spirit (whatever may be its extent) was laid in the declarations of the right hon. gentleman himself, who affirmed, that it was impossible an upright or useful administration could exist whilst the House was constituted as it is, and who has unanswerably illustrated the truth of his position by the evidence of his own? Did the right hon. gentleman imagine that he could prescribe bounds beyond which this spirit should not pass? Did he imagine that he could plant the root, and prevent the shoots from springing up? Does the right hon. gentleman think that he can extinguish, in the minds of the people, that distrust of the present system of government which he himself taught them to entertain? or does he think by coercion to make them tamely submit to those abuses which he himself was the foremost to expose? Does he think to guard the constitution from violence by persecuting those who would peaceably reform it? Does he think to silence the voice of complaint by a sullen refusal to remedy the grievance? This road may be pursued for a season, "but the end thereof is death." Instead of inflaming by persecution, let me advise you to conciliate by seasonable concession. The system of terror can neither remove nor silence a deep-rooted and well-founded discontent.—Let me remind you of the opinion of Mr. Burke upon this subject. Much as I now differ from that great man, much as I lament that he has misemployed his extraordinary talents to render prevalent those errors which have entailed upon us such frightful consequences, it is impossible not to admire that profound wisdom which formerly distinguished his efforts in the cause of humanity and justice. In the fatal contest with America he most luminously marked out the great duties and interests of governments in moments of emergency, and has shown them to be inseparable. "If there be one criterion (said Mr. Burke) which more than all the rest distinguishes a wise and prudent government from an administration, weak and improvident, it is this: well to know when and in what manner to yield what it is impossible to keep. Early reformatations are amicable compromises with a friend in power—Late reformatations are terms imposed upon a conquered enemy—Early reformatations are made in cool blood—Late reformatations are made in a state of inflammation. In such a state the people see in govern-

ment nothing respectable—They will look at the grievance, and they will look at nothing else. Like a furious populace provoked by the abuses of a house of ill fame, they no longer think of regulation—they go to work the shortest way—they abate the nuisance—they pull down the house."* This is a sort of epitome of universal history; above all, of the history of the times we live in. From the proud rejection of these maxims of policy and prudence, the governments of Europe are one after another tumbling into ruin by sudden violence, instead of being insensibly altered by peaceable reformation. To this cause the original independence of America is to be ascribed. In the beginning, she sought only the reasonable privileges of a dependent community. It was the refusal that gave birth to her independence. We refused to look at her grievances whilst they were curable. The same procrastinating spirit prevailed at that period which prevails now, and the same delusion as to the effects of terror and coercion. Lord Chatham's warning voice was rejected. "Give satisfaction to America," said that great statesman. "Conciliate her affection—Do it to-night—Do it before you sleep." But we slept, and did it not, and America was separated from us for ever. Ireland in the same manner obtained a sudden and unsought-for independence, and has been brought to her present state of alarming hostility to this country. We refused to see what stared us in the face in characters reddening into blood: "But the light broke in upon us at last, not through well-constructed windows, but through the yawning chasms of our ruin. We were taught wisdom through humiliation." I am afraid we have much more to learn in that useful but melancholy school. The identical system by which America was lost to Great Britain, ministers are now acting over again with regard to Ireland at this moment. They refuse to redress her grievances: they refuse to listen to her complaints: what America was, Ireland, perhaps even England itself, will shortly be, if you obstinately refuse to adopt that system of conciliation which alone can bring back affection and obedience to any government that has lost it.

I can have no interest, Sir, in painting my country in such dismal colours. I can have no desire to see the land I live

* See Vol. 21, p. 12.

in, and in which I inherit so many comforts and advantages, involved in confusion and blood. My only wish is, to see a happy, powerful, disinterested union, which may save from destruction the constitution of our fathers. But whatever is to be done, must be done quickly.—When you are the voluntary givers, you can command the limits of what you give, and fix the qualifications of the gift; but if discontent arises, and what is now petitioned for, is brought forward as an imperious demand, you are disrobed of all choice and deliberation. Think of this awful conjuncture whilst thinking is of any use. For my own part, I solemnly declare, that I think there is no alternative between an immediate reform, by which the nation may be made happy, and a revolution by which it will be involved in blood and ruin. I may be told, that bad men may avail themselves of a moderate reform to compass the utter overthrow of the constitution; but if there really be those whom no concession can satisfy, yet by the very attempt you will add to the number of those who will feel new attachment to the constitution, and new ardour in its defence: you will separate those who are sincerely attached to the genuine principles of the government from those who may secretly wish to destroy it. You will unmask those whose views go beyond reform, and deprive them of that pretence which gives effect to their animosity; and you will furnish the government with new strength to resist their machinations. Let ministers instantly forego that fatal system of coercion which forced America from her connexion into the arms of France, and which is, at this very moment, driving Ireland to seek the same protection. Let them relinquish the insane attempt to retain the affection of that country at the point of the bayonet, which is hourly tearing out of the hearts of Irishmen those feelings of kindness and love for England upon which the permanence of the union between the two countries can alone be looked to. This fatal system of coercion and terror which ministers seem resolved to persevere in, has made half Europe submit to the arms of France, and has given the air of romance, or rather of enchantment, to the career of her conquests—Now in Holland—now on the Rhine—almost at the same moment overturning the states of Italy, and overawing the empire at the gates of Vienna. Without meaning to under-rate the unexam-

pled energies of a mighty nation repelling the atrocious combinations of despotism against her liberties, I may assert safely, that she principally owed her triumphs to the very abuses which provoked the strife. The nations with which she contended had no privileges to fight for, nor any governments worth preserving, and they felt, therefore, no sort of interest in their preservation—Whilst the powers of such governments remained, their subjects were drawn up in arms, and appeared to be armies: but when invasion had silenced the power which oppressed them, they became in a moment the subjects and the soldiers of their invaders. Take warning from so many examples—the principles of revolution are eternal and universal.

Let me conclude with repeating again, that the condition of this country renders a reform most critically seasonable. The nation stands in the most perilous predicament; government is forced to call upon the people for greater exertions than at former times—burthens which appeared impracticable even in speculation, are now to be carried into practical effect. This must be done either by affection or by force; and this is the moment for the choice. Give the people the blessings of the constitution, and they will join with ardour in its defence: raise within these walls a standard which was never before raised, around which the friends of the constitution may rally, and to which the people will be attracted by the feelings of confidence and of attachment; it will give general satisfaction; it will unite all who are divided, and create a general spirit to bear up against the calamities by which we are surrounded.

Mr. Pitt said:—Feeling, Sir, as I do, the danger with which the present proposition is attended, on the grounds upon which it has been supported, and in the circumstances in which it has been brought forward, I am very desirous, as early as possible in the debate, to state the reasons by which I am determined to give it my most decided opposition. The hon. gentleman who introduced the motion, began with disclaiming very distinctly, and, as far as he went, very satisfactorily, all those abstract principles of inprescriptible right, all those doctrines of the rights of man, on which those without doors, who are most eager in their professions of attachment to the cause which he now supports, rest the propriety of their demand, and upon which alone they would

be contented with any species of parliamentary reform. The hon. gentleman denies the truth of that principle which prescribes any particular form of government, as that which is essential to freedom; or that universal suffrage is necessary to civil liberty; or that it even must depend upon that light which the revolution of France has let in upon the world, but from which, however, he derives hopes of so much advantage to the general happiness of mankind. But, in disclaiming these views of the question, and in placing it upon the footing of the practical benefit it was calculated to produce, the hon. gentleman did not state all the considerations by which the conduct of a wise statesman was to be regulated, and the judgment of an upright senator to be guided. The question is not merely, whether some alteration might or might not be attended with advantage; but it is the degree of advantage which that alteration is likely to effect in the shape in which it is introduced; the mischief which may be occasioned from not adopting the measure, and the chance, on the other hand, of producing by the alteration an effect upon those to whom you give way, very different from that which induced you to hazard the experiment. These are the considerations which the subject ought to embrace, and the views upon which impartial men must decide.

Before we adopt the conclusions of the hon. gentleman, we have a right, it is even imposed upon us as a duty, to take into our view as a leading object, what probability there is by encouraging the particular mode of attaining that union, or of effecting that separation of the friends of moderate reform and the determined enemies to the constitution, which they conceive it calculated to produce; we must consider the danger of introducing an evil of a much greater magnitude than that which we are now desirous to repair; and how far it is prudent to give an opening for those principles which aim at nothing less than annihilation of the constitution. The learned gentleman who seconded the motion said, that those who formerly supported parliamentary reform had sown the seeds of that eagerness for parliamentary reform which was now displayed, and of the principles on which it was now pressed: he thinks that those who have ever supported the cause of parliamentary reform upon grounds of practical advantage, must not oppose those who have nothing in com-

mon with them, but the name of reform, making that the cover for objects widely different, in order to support that pretence which they assume upon principles diametrically opposite to those upon which the true friends to the cause of reform ever proceeded. Will the hon. gentleman who made, or the learned gentleman who seconded the motion, say, that those men who contend, as an indispensable point, for universal suffrage;—that those who hold doctrines which go to the extinction of every branch of the constitution, because they think it convenient to avail themselves of the pretence of parliamentary reform, as the first step towards the attainment of their own views, and as facilitating their progress;—that those who, though they condescended to take advantage of the co-operation of those who support the cause of reform in this House, yet have never applied to parliament, and who would not even receive as a boon, what they contend for as a right;—can it seriously be said, that such men as these have embarked in the cause, or have proceeded on the principles of those who, upon far different grounds, and for far different objects, have moved this important question? Will they say, that such men have adopted the principles of those who formerly agitated the cause of reform—men who have avowedly borrowed their political creed from the doctrines of the Rights of Man, from the writings of Paine, from the monstrous and detestable system of the French Jacobins and affiliated societies, from that proud, shallow, and presumptuous philosophy, which, pretending to communicate new lights to mankind, has carried theoretical absurdity higher than the wild imaginations of the most extravagant visionaries ever conceived, and practical evil to an extent which no age or history has equalled? Will it be said that those men pursued only that practical advantage, which a reform upon principles consonant to the British constitution was calculated to afford, who saw without emotion the detestable theories of the Jacobins developed in the destructive ravage which marked their progress, and their practical effects, in the bloody tragedies which were acted on the theatre of France, and who adhered to their system of indefeasible right, when they saw such overwhelming proofs of its theoretical falsehood, and of its baleful tendency? Will it be believed that those men are actuated by principles consonant to the

spirit of the British constitution, who, with the exception of the pretence of parliamentary reform, adopted all the forms of French political systems, who followed them through all their consequences, who looked upon the ravage which they spread through all laws, religion, and property, without shrinking from their practical effect, and who deemed the horrors with which it was attended, as the triumphs of their system? Can we believe, that men who remained unmoved by the dismal example which their principles had produced, whose pretensions rose and fell with the success or the decline of Jacobinism in every part of the world, were ever actuated by a similarity of motives and of objects, with those who prosecuted the cause of reform as a practical advantage, and maintained it upon constitutional views?

The utmost point of difference, indeed, that ever subsisted between those who supported, and those who opposed the question of reform, previous to the French revolution, which forms a new era in politics, and in the history of the world, was union and concert in comparison with the views of those who maintained that question upon grounds of expediency, and those who assert it as a matter of right. The question with those who contended for reform on grounds of expediency, then was, whether the means proposed were calculated to infuse new vigour into the constitution? The object with those who affect a parliamentary reform upon French principles, is the shortest way to compass its utter destruction. From the period when the new and alarming era of the French revolution broke in upon the world, and the doctrines which it ushered into light laid hold of the minds of men, I found that the grounds upon which the question rested were essentially and fundamentally altered. Whatever may have been my former opinion, am I to be told that I am inconsistent, if I feel that it is expedient to forego the advantage which any alteration may be calculated to produce, rather than afford an inlet to principles with which no compromise can be made: rather than hazard the utter annihilation of a system under which this country has flourished in its prosperity, by which it has been supported in its adversity, and by the energy and vigour of which it has been enabled to recover from the difficulties with which it has had to contend? In the warmth of argument

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upon this subject, the learned gentleman has conceived himself at liberty to assume a proposition, not only unsupported by reasoning, but even contradicted by his own statements. The learned gentleman assumed, that it was necessary to adopt the moderate reform proposed, in order to separate those whom such a plan would satisfy, from those who would be satisfied with none; but who, I contend, by means of this, would only labour to attain the complete object of their wishes, in the annihilation of the constitution. Those men who treat parliament as an usurpation, and monarchy as an invasion of the rights of man, would not receive a reform which was not the recognition of their right, and which they would consider as vitiated if conveyed in any other shape. Though such men had availed themselves of the aid of those who supported parliamentary reform on other grounds, would they be contented with this species of reform as an ultimate object?

But does the learned gentleman mean to assume, that those who are the friends of moderate reform, must remain confounded with those whom no reform will satisfy, unless some measure like the present is adopted? Where has such a wish for moderate reform been expressed? If those who are even thought to entertain sentiments favourable to that cause, have cherished them in silence, if they have abstained from pressing them at a moment when they would have served only to promote the views of those who wished to annihilate, not to reform, is it to be apprehended that any ill effects will ensue, unless you adopt some expedient to distinguish the moderate reformer from the desperate foe? Yet this is the main argument of the learned gentleman, which he has put into a thousand different shapes. I do not believe, however, that the temper of moderate reformers will lead them to make common cause with the irreconcilable enemies of the constitution. If there are really many who may be ranked as moderate reformers, it is at least probable that they feel the force of the danger which I have stated; that they think it wiser to check their wishes than to risk the inlet of Jacobin principles, and the imprudence of affording to the enemies of the constitution the means of accomplishing its destruction. Has there been, however, any decisive manifestation of their desires, or is their reason to believe, that,

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disappointed in their wishes, they will be immediately driven beyond the bounds of duty to the constitution? If there is no security that those, whose views have already pointed beyond reform, will be recalled to better sentiments; if there are even certain grounds to believe that they will merely employ any reform that may be introduced, as a step towards realizing their own system; upon what pretence can the present measure be held out as calculated to reconcile those men to the constitution? From the conduct of gentlemen on the other side, it is obvious that they do not conceive any decisive manifestation of the wishes of the people for a moderate reform being now introduced, to have taken place. My reason for such an opinion is this: we have seen that the gentlemen in opposition have not been deficient in their efforts to procure every expression of the public concurrence in the objects for which they have contended. From their own account, these efforts have not been unsuccessful; but, supposing that no efforts of theirs had been employed, and that to the spontaneous impulse of the people themselves are to be ascribed the petitions which have been voted in different quarters, to a degree indeed, in their opinion, to decide the sense of the country to be in favour of an immediate peace, and the removal of ministers, it follows, that those who have presented such petitions have not felt, or the exertions of opposition have not been able to excite, any expression of that opinion they have so often urged, that no change of men, without a change of system, would lead to any permanent good.

It does not appear then, that there is any call upon the House to adopt a measure which, so far from being necessary to satisfy men friendly to a moderate reform, they have not, in any shape, expressed a wish to obtain. Before the practical expediency of this measure, then, comes to be discussed, its practical necessity must be established. In this proof, however, the hon. gentlemen have failed. I need not, therefore, go into the state of the country to refute their statements. Indeed, I must observe that all that has been urged upon this topic, has been nothing more than assertion. The difficulties under which the country labours, the war with France, the inroads upon the constitution, the profusion of public expenditure, were the topics upon which they insisted, and which they said

would have been avoided if parliamentary reform had formerly been adopted. I boldly contend, however, that in the origin of the war, in the efforts to an unparalleled extent which the nature of the contest forced us to exert; that in what they call inroads, but which we contend were necessary bulwarks for the defence of the constitution, the feelings of the people went uniformly with the proceedings of parliament. I will venture to assert, that at no time were the functions of parliament more consonant with the feelings of the people, than during the painful yet necessary struggles to which we have been obliged to submit in the present contest. That the nation has, during the progress of the war, suffered many and serious calamities, I do not dispute; calamities, however, much less severe in their effects than those which have been undergone by countries acting upon a different system.

It has, indeed, been urged, and with no ordinary degree of perseverance, that the voice of the nation is against the proceedings of government. That, however, is more a matter of opinion than of fact; and every man will naturally judge of the credit that ought to attach to such an assertion, from his personal inquiries on the subject. But I will undertake to say, that at the present moment, amidst all the embarrassments unavoidably occasioned by the vigorous prosecution of hostilities, the system pursued by parliament in support of the measures of government, is the system of the people; and that parliament at no period possessed in a more ample degree the confidence of the country than it does now. [Here Mr. Fox showed some signs of dissent.] The right hon. gentleman may be disposed to controvert this opinion, but I am sure he cannot maintain the contrary with more perfect conviction than I advance what I now assert. The right hon. gentleman, the House will recollect, was accustomed to assert last session, with equal boldness and vehemence, that the sense of the country was against the system of ministers. Good God! where can the right hon. gentleman have lived? In what remote corner of the country can he have passed his time? What great public question can he state upon which the public have not evinced a degree of interest, as great as that shown upon any former occasion? On the contrary, if ever there was a period which we could

select, as the one in which the attention of the public was the most turned to public affairs, it was precisely that period in which the learned gentleman has described the public to have lost all interest in the deliberations of parliament.

I know it is maintained, that parliament does not represent the great body of the nation, and that the result of general elections presents no striking character or impressive feature of the sentiments of the people. But I desire it may also be recollected, whether there are not many leading instances, and particular circumstances attendant on general elections, that go strongly to express the opinion entertained by the constituent body: and taking up the consideration in that point of view, I do insist, that the approbation given by those who had been members of the last parliament, to the commencement and prosecution of the war, were powerful recommendations in their favour at the late general election. I will for a moment, pursuing this argument, request the House to take the parliamentary representation as it has been stated and recommended by the hon. mover. I will desire the hon. gentleman himself to look, for an instant, to his own statement of the proposed additional representation of the counties, and then candidly decide, whether he can argue that the sense of the people was not in a great degree to be collected at general elections? It is submitted in that statement, to extend the number of county members from 92 to 113: the augmentation, therefore, did not consist of many. And does the hon. gentleman intend to except the 92 former members by a general proscription? or will he pretend to say, that the system of counties, as it stands at present in point of representation, goes for nothing? Certainly he cannot undertake to advance an argument, so evidently inconsistent with his own plan of reform. If, therefore, the 113 members proposed by the hon. gentleman to represent the counties, would express the true sense of the people, it cannot be denied, on the same grounds, that the 92 who were elected by their constituents, were in a very considerable proportion the organs of the public opinion. The arguments therefore adduced by the hon. gentleman go against his own declaration, that the sense of the people is not the sense of parliament, and that sense was fully manifested in favour of the war at the general election. Since, therefore,

I recollect the declaration of the hon. gentleman at the end of the last session that parliament did not possess the confidence of the people, am I to be discouraged now, after the general election, from saying that they actually do enjoy that confidence? But that is not the only statement which I can make in justification of this assertion. I will appeal to the proceedings in great and populous cities, as well as in the city of London, in which the opinions of gentlemen on the other side of the House, with respect to parliament not possessing the confidence of the people, were as strongly refuted, on a fair poll, by a vast majority of the electors, as by the elections for the counties to which he has referred. It consequently appears, that the hon. gentleman has not specific ground to proceed on; but that he has totally failed in his assertion, that parliament does not enjoy the public confidence.

The learned gentleman has, in the fanciful flights of his eloquence, pushed his object farther than his hon. friend; for he has not only said, that parliament has lost the confidence of the people, but that the proceedings of parliament have no effect whatever on the public mind. The learned gentleman, however, wished to unite two classes of persons very opposite in their pursuits. He is anxious to reconcile those, who by the very nature of their principles are altogether irreconcilable; those whose political doctrines are known to be inimical to legal government, and those who are distinguished by the moderation of their tenets. With respect to the moderates, it cannot be too minutely attended to by the House, that they propose no plan of reform whatever; that they prefer no complaints; that they set out with no petition on that subject. And, is it proper or reasonable that the House should spontaneously give what had not been even demanded? With regard to the other persons alluded to by the learned gentleman, the House, by agreeing to what has been urged in their favour would give them not merely what they claim, but what they demand as an absolute right, and what is, in reality the first step to the accomplishment of their real views. That the present moment should be a time for the measure of reform appears rather inconsistent, when it is admitted by the learned gentleman himself, that radical discontent is prevalent in the country, and when it is unde-

niable, that the men who talk of liberty aim merely at licentiousness, and set up the name of reform as a disguise to mask their revolutionary projects. Concessions to such men, at such a time, would be impolitic, would be fatal, would be absurd. The House also, by agreeing to the arguments of the learned gentleman, would grant what could not be of any use to one set of men, and what would be productive of great mischief to the other description. Such concessions, I will maintain, are not warranted by the sound maxims of philosophy, not to be measured by the numerous examples drawn from the history of the world.

The hon. mover has talked highly of the blessings which are to result to mankind from the establishment of French liberty; and because new lights have appeared to set off the doctrine of freedom, this House is therefore to alter their principles of government, and to accommodate themselves to the new order of things. The system of French liberty is represented as a new light diffusing itself over all the world, and spreading in every region happiness and improvement. Good God! is the House to be told, after the benefits which have been derived from the Revolution in this country, that other and more essential benefits are to be added by adopting the principles of the French revolution? From such lights, however, I hope we shall ever protect this constitution, as against principles inconsistent with any government. If we are to be relieved from any evils under which we may at present labour, by means of this new light, I, for one, beg leave to enter my solemn protest against the idea. The doctrines upon which it is founded, are false, shallow, and presumptuous, more absurd than the most pestilent theories that were ever engendered by the disordered imagination of man; more hostile to the real interests of mankind, to national prosperity, to individual happiness, to intellectual and moral improvement, than any tyranny by which the human species was ever afflicted. And, for this new luminary, shall we abandon the polar star of the British constitution, by which we have been led to happiness and glory, by which the country has supported every danger, which it has been called upon to encounter, and risen superior to every difficulty by which it has been assailed.

But, independent of these general

grounds on which I have opposed this motion, I have no difficulty in stating that the particular measure appears liable to so many objections, that, in no circumstances, could I have given it my assent. Indeed I could as little concur in the plan of the hon. gentleman as in a proposal for universal suffrage. How near it approaches to that system I shall not now discuss. The hon. gentleman, on a former occasion, said, that he would rather have universal suffrage than no reform. The learned gentleman, however, disclaims universal suffrage, when asserted as a matter of right. Certainly, indeed, some people have reason to complain of the learned gentleman who, in supporting a plan of reform on grounds of practical advantage, refuses that universal suffrage to which he has no objection on practical grounds, merely because it is asked as a matter of right. He will, however, find it difficult to reconcile that practical expedience with the new light of general freedom which has so unexpectedly broken in upon the world. The proposition, however, is neither more nor less than, with the exception of one-fifth, to abolish the whole system of the representation of this country, as it has been formed by charter or by parliamentary arrangement; as it has been moulded by time and experience; as it has been blended with our manners and customs, without regard to the rights of compensations, or to the general effect of modifications. All these are to be swept away, and a numerical scale of representation to be substituted in its place; the country is to be divided into districts, and every householder, paying taxes, is to vote. Thus, a system would be introduced little short of universal suffrage. On what experience, on what practice, is this gigantic scale of numerical representation to be introduced? In former plans the variety of the modes of representation was admitted to be proof, how much better time and circumstances may mould and regulate representation than any institutions founded on reasonings *à priori*, and how necessary it was to give way to the effects of such experience. It is not the harsh uniformity of principles, each pushed to its extreme, but the general complexion arising out of the various shades, which forms the harmony of the representation, and the practical excellence of the constitution, capable of improving itself consistently with its fundamental principles. Who will say

that this beautiful variety may not have contributed to the advantage of the whole? That system was practical, and experience has confirmed the excellence of it, but the present plan goes the whole length of destroying all the existing representation, with the exception only of the county members (why they alone are excepted I am at a loss to conceive), and bringing all to one system. Are the gentlemen who propose this system aware of the benefits resulting from a varied state of representation, and are they ready at once to resign them.

It never was contended that the inequality of the representation has been attended with any practical disadvantage; that the interest of Yorkshire was neglected because it sent only two members to parliament; or that Birmingham and Manchester experienced any ill consequences from having no representatives. How does it appear that universal suffrage is better than if the right to vote be founded on numerical, or even alphabetical arrangement? There is no practice, certainly no recognised practice, for its basis. The experiment proposed is new, extensive, overturning all the ancient system, and substituting something in its stead, without any theoretical advantage, or any practical recommendation. In the mixed representation which now subsists, the scot and lot elections are those which have been chiefly objected to, and the hon. gentleman opposite formerly agreed with me in opinion, that burghage tenures and small corporations were even less exceptionable than open burghs with small qualifications. Yet this extension of small qualifications, from which it has been a general complaint that much confusion, debauchery, and abuse at elections arose, forms the principal feature in the hon. gentleman's plan. Upon these grounds, therefore, looking seriously at the situation of the country, examining facts with attention, unless we would seal our own dishonour, unless we would belie the testimony of our constituents, we must dissent from the reasons on which the necessity of this proposition is founded. We ought to resist the specific plan which the hon gentleman has offered, unless we would renounce the tried system of our representation, for a plan at once highly exceptionable in theory, and totally unsupported by experience.

Sir Francis Burdett said:—In rising to solicit the attention of the House, I can

only declare, that it is my most ardent wish to preserve this country from ruin: I want to protect the rights and liberties of the people, but not the undue influence of a junto of nobility and placemen. I shall therefore speak my sentiments candidly and unequivocally. I shall also speak them boldly, for the times call for bold and unequivocal language. I do not look for the applause of this House, nor do I expect to be supported by any clamour out of it. I shall speak on behalf of the people of this country, whose interest it is my object to promote. I should be young, indeed, in my contemplation of the human character, if I expected that such behaviour could lead to favour. It is not my intention to follow the chancellor of the exchequer through all his turnings and windings; that would be an Herculean labour, to which I do not pretend to be equal. I state, therefore, in the first place, that endeavours to encroach upon the liberties of the people characterized an early part of the present reign, and that, of late years, efforts directed to that end have been much too successful, and that we are going rapidly on towards an arbitrary government. Good God! when shall we lay aside that humiliating confidence which has enabled the minister to bring us into so deplorable a condition, and which confidence this minister has this day laid claim to, by the advancing of principles that lead directly to slavery? Have you any thing before you to justify you in your confidence in that minister, or in your continuance of support to his measures? You have supported him in this war; a war which, let the minister say what he pleases of it, is nothing but a second edition of the American war. It is another bold and daring, but unsuccessful, attempt to stifle the flame of liberty. The minister attempted to restore monarchy in France; he has procured its utter annihilation there. He endeavoured to destroy the principles of the French republic; he has established them on a basis never to be shaken. Now, as to the motion which is before you, it has my concurrence, as a measure that is highly necessary, and one that should be put into a course of trial without delay. Had the people been freely and fairly represented in this House before this war commenced, I have no doubt but that the war would never have been undertaken. It is in vain for the minister now to talk of preserving the bulwarks of our constitu-

tion; he has himself destroyed them. It is in vain for him to deny the existence of abuses, for by his practice, and the practices of his predecessors, abuses are interwoven with, and become an integral part, of our constitution. Should any ask, where these abuses of our ancient constitution are to be found? I would answer, you may see them in the barracks that have been erected all over this country; you may find them in the laws that have been thrust down the throats of the people, by which they have been prohibited from saying what they think. You may find it in the practice of sending away the public money, without the consent, or even knowledge, of parliament. All these things, I say, are abuses on our ancient constitution, and which never could have crept into it but for the corruption of the executive government. That corruption, unless you have a reform in parliament, will soon become the euthanasia of our constitution. It has reduced us, with all the advantages of our soil and climate, to a state that no more resembles, in point of liberty, that of our ancestors, than if we were the inhabitants of some foreign land. Indeed, with all our boast of wealth, the mean and hard lot of poverty falls to the share of the mass of the people; and that comfort which ought to be the reward of honest labour, is seized by the griping hand of a rapacious government. But all these things are drawing towards a conclusion, and that which was once a matter of choice, is now a matter of necessity; and the chancellor of the exchequer, although an enemy to liberty, has, by his conduct, contributed to revolution. What was the cause of the revolution in France? The progress of reason and philosophy? Alas! reason and philosophy can boast of no such influence over the conduct of mankind. That revolution was caused by the extravagance, profligacy, and insolence of its administration. The same causes are operating with us; and, highly as I esteem the talents of a right honourable gentleman (Mr. Fox), even he could do nothing substantial for the benefit of the people, were he minister to-morrow, without an entire change of system in our politics; nor even then, unless there is a full and free representation of the people. I hope, therefore, the people will not be content with any change of men or measures, without a full, fair, and free representation. Perhaps I may be told, that monarchy itself cannot be supported with-

out corruption. If that be so, then I, for one, am a republican. Liberty can never flourish where there is corruption in the government. Liberty is, in my mind, the most valuable jewel in human life. It is what I value more than life. Without it, life itself is of no value; and, with poverty, is preferable to wealth without. I prefer hard liberty to servile pomp. I will, therefore, while I live, use every means in my power to obtain for the people their just rights. I warn them not to be the dupes of corruption. It is not ministers that I wish to oppose: it is corruption that I wish to destroy. With respect to universal suffrage, that is a point which may be discussed hereafter. I need only add, that the present motion shall have my hearty support.

Mr. *Robert Thornton* denied that the system of government was so corrupt as the last speaker had represented. He would not say that some reform was not requisite; but these were unfriendly times for reformation. In a few years, he hoped it would be otherwise; but when a house was on fire, a man should think only of extinguishing it. No doubt a reform in parliament might lead to many other useful reforms; but he must give his negative to the specific proposition of the hon. mover.

Sir *Richard Hill* said, he had been under a three-fold difficulty as to the business of that day: first, whether he should come to the House at all: secondly, whether he should speak at all: thirdly, whether he should vote at all. Two of these obstacles had been surmounted, but he had still some doubts as to the third. If he divided at all, it would be for the motion. He should not have risen on the present occasion, but that he wished to avoid the charge of inconsistency, should he vote differently from what he did, when the same question was agitated in 1784. He then voted against the reform, because he thought the prosperity of the country carried with it the best argument against making any alterations; therefore, in the short speech he then made, he quoted the well-known Italian sentence, "*Stavo bene, volevo star' meglio, sto quì.*" In plain English, "I was well, would be better, took physic and died." The face of public affairs was now evidently changed for the worse; those who had been attempting the cure of the nation, had been so nearly following the system of Dr. Sangrado, by dif-

ferent bleedings one after another, they had so debilitated the patient, that she can hardly stand on her legs. It has been said, this is not a time to make experiments. I am (said sir Richard) quite of a contrary opinion, for if I saw a friend at the last gasp, I should say, "good doctor, can you think of nothing else, can you try no other medicine to save the life of the patient?" For my own part, I think things are as bad with us now, as they were at the worst period of the American war; consequently, there is as much need of a change of measures and systems. If we ask who brought us into this situation, the gentlemen on the treasury bench will tell us, "that all our calamities are owing to a desperate republican opposition." Ask those on the other side of the House, they will say, that the country is drained and ruined by a weak and wicked administration;" but if I may plainly deliver my own opinion, administration and opposition are the two millstones between which the constitution is ground to powder. As to the former being weak, they certainly are not; perhaps a more able set of men never acted in their places. As to their being wicked, he supposed they were no more so than their predecessors; they did not pretend to have much religion, and he heartily wished they had more; a wish with which they ought not to be offended. He believed they were worthy men in opposition, who acted from principle, and he should rejoice to see the virtues and talents of gentlemen on both sides united to save the country, the present state of which was, in great measure, owing to the war; it was, therefore, a real satisfaction to himself, that he had always opposed the war, when he thought peace might be had, and that he had also opposed the sending of money out of the kingdom by way of loans to the Emperor; loans, indeed, they ought not to be called, for he had uniformly thought they would never be repaid. He should say no more on this subject of reform, but that he heartily wished we might begin one individually, by each of us endeavouring to reform ourselves, and in so doing, we ought to look up to Him who was too little thought of in our debates and consultations, but without whom all our councils would be vain.

Sir *William Geary* said, he was at heart a well-wisher to a reform in parliament, but disapproved of the plan now proposed;

because it appeared to be too nearly connected with the system of universal suffrage. He did not think this the very worst time to bring the question forward, but there were difficulties as to what plan the friends of reform would agree to; he did not, however, despair of that difference being made up, and that at no very distant time, and then he should be happy to give it his support. The election by ballot, he thought, would be the only radical cure for the many evils now experienced: it would lead to a good and substantial reform. There was one principle on which he thought a good parliamentary reform might be founded. The object of it was, to prevent the enormous expense that was often incurred by gentlemen at elections, and to prevent the exclusion from that House of many worthy persons who could not afford the expenses of these elections. To his own knowledge many were excluded from parliament who would be an honour to the legislature. His plan was this, to divide the country into districts, each of which to send one member to parliament, every person to be qualified to vote who paid poor-rates to the amount of 10 or 20*l*. By these means members would be elected at very little or no expense. At a future time he might propose this plan, if it met with the concurrence of his friends.

Mr. *Milbank* said, that the best of human institutions were not free from defects. He thought that many evils had crept into our constitution, and that we ought to provide a remedy for them as they appeared. This was evidently the case with the representation of the people. He wished for a reform in that particular, as being the best means of destroying that implicit confidence in ministers, which had led to so many evils in this country. He was, therefore, in favour of the motion.

Lord *Hawkesbury* said, he should give the motion his decided negative. He thought the time at which it was brought forward was peculiarly improper; but that was not his principal objection. He was a decided enemy to any reform in that House; and although he was against any idea of a reform in parliament, he need not rest his objection upon that idea alone. He was furnished with objections to it from those who were its advocates. They all differed in their plans so much, that not any two of them agreed upon

one plan. The reason for so much difference was obvious; the evil of which they complained had no existence; if it had, there could be no difficulty about the remedy. If the evil was in the overgrowing influence of the landed interest, the remedy would be applied to that. If to the open, or the close boroughs, the remedy would be apparent; but it belonged to neither, for no evil had existence. He therefore did not wonder, that gentlemen could not agree upon any plan of reform. He was fortified in that opinion by the conduct of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox), for although he had voted several times for a reform generally, yet his name had never yet appeared to any specific plan of parliamentary reform. A man of his uncommon abilities would not have been so long at a loss for a plan, if the evil had any real existence. He therefore must repeat, that the reason why no specific remedy had been agreed upon was, that no evil had ever been really felt. As to the quotation from Mr. Burke by a learned gentleman, he felt himself entitled to complain that the publication in question had been stated partially; for in that very pamphlet, out of which the quotation was taken, there was contained a positive objection to a parliamentary reform. He must call on the House to look at the cause of the evil, if any was ever felt, in consequence of the determinations of that House. If it could be proved that the close boroughs were the cause of the evil, he would be content that some remedy should be attempted to be applied. But he denied the assertion. Could any gentleman prove that, at any time, the decisions of the House of Commons were not in unison with the opinions of the nation? He maintained positively that they could not in a single instance. He would take the result of the last general election, and he would take that part of it which no man would deny was the most popular part of it. To take the counties, for instance, and populous towns, there it would be found that the returns of those who had supported the war were in the proportion of four to one against those who had opposed it in the late parliament. What purpose, then, was a reform to answer? Unless it was to be contended that the House of Commons should not be in unison with the people. He admitted that the country might at times have too much trust in ministers, or too

much distrust in their opponents. But if ever such an evil existed, a reform in the representation would not correct it. As to the close boroughs, he would say, there could be no more reason to complain of them than of the popular places, unless it could be proved that they were the cause of any evil, which no one had ever yet done. There had been many wars in which this country had been engaged, that might not be just or necessary. Many that were just and necessary that were protracted longer than was wise or prudent, but none in which the House had persisted against the will of the people. The American war was, at its commencement, a popular war in this country. It was a war in which the House of Commons and the people were hand in hand together. The opinion of the people changed in the course of that war, so did that of the House of Commons; and the reason why administration was afterwards supported for some time was, that some dangerous riots happened in the metropolis, which made the House, out of a sense of common danger, rally round the executive government to support the state from impending ruin. This was a striking instance of parliament acting in unison with the people. Upon these grounds he was justified in saying that a parliamentary reform would not cure the evil of which gentlemen complained, if, indeed, any evil existed, which he denied. The fault, if there was any, was in the people themselves. For these reasons, he saw great impolicy in altering any part of the constitution upon plans of mere speculation. Besides, if a thing of this sort was to be commenced, he would ask the House where they were to conclude their labours? Speculative men might say that the county of Middlesex, because the metropolis was contained in it, and had one-eighth of the population of the kingdom, and consequently contributed very much to defray the expense of government, ought to have a much larger share of representation. Were gentlemen aware where they were to stop if such principles were admitted? But really there was no foundation for the complaints which had been exhibited against the present representation of the people. So far was the House of Commons at this moment from speaking any language but that of the people of this country, that they went hand in hand together. So far was the House of Com-

mons from innovating upon the privileges of the people, that he would pledge himself to prove that the popular power was continually improving, and that the House of Commons was now more popular than ever it had been before this time. Let gentlemen recollect the principle and provisions of Mr. Grenville's bill relative to contested elections; let them recollect the number of close boroughs that had been thrown open and made popular. Besides these, there were other points to which it was not quite regular to allude, but which, however, he might hint at—the very proceedings of the House were continually published, by which the people had opportunities of knowing what was passing daily, which must have great influence on the House, by the opportunities that were afforded to the people of forming their opinions from time to time. These were general objections which he had to the principle of a parliamentary reform. His objections were not less decided to the specific plan which was now proposed, if a specific plan it could be called. It went upon the principle of universal suffrage, or nearly so, to which he understood that but very few of that House would assent. It was a principle abandoned at the time of the French revolution, as had been stated by a very able writer, Mr. Mackintosh. Taking the whole of the case together, he saw the chance of danger so great, and the advantage none, that he could not possibly assent to the present motion. It would open a door to universal suffrage, as was apparent from the accounts he had read of speeches delivered at the discussion of the subject; and he thought it might lead to the overthrow of the monarchy, and the House of Commons together.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, he had listened with great attention to the speech of the noble lord who had just sat down. A speech which was remarkable for its eloquence, and as remarkable for its steady opposition *in limine*, against all reform of all kinds, that it might as well be called a speech for a revolution as much as against reform. He should have commended it the more if it came from a quarter in which he could confide, and rest secure that the boldness of it would be followed up in the hour of attack; but when he reflected that it came from the same quarter as the sentiments that had been uttered against France, that we were to pursue a *bellum internecinum*;

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that we were engaged in the cause of law, of civil order, of humanity, of religion; and reflected on what part had been taken in the same quarter, and knew that these very persons who thus talked boldly and sturdily, would afterwards, in the hour of real peril, be ready to crawl upon their knees and lick the blood off the feet of these regicides—when he contrasted this blustering language with the real spirit of those who uttered it, he was sure, that if these same persons should enter into a *bellum internecinum* with the reformers of England they might be made as humble with regard to them as they had shown themselves towards the French. He therefore was not surprised to hear the noble lord so bold in his speech against the reformers; but this assertion, that the parliament is now more popular than ever, was going a little farther than any man had ever done before. He liked the manner in which the noble lord proved, as he called it, the truth of that assertion; he stated the merits of Mr. Grenville's bill. It was an excellent regulation with respect to contested elections. How was it excellent? by taking away altogether from the House of Commons the right of determining on the merits of contested elections; by showing that the House of Commons could not, as men of honour, be trusted with the decision of such a matter as a contested election; that they had given in false verdicts upon that matter frequently, and therefore ought to have that power no longer; that therefore an act of parliament was necessary to take away their power, because they had acted dishonourably; this was the noble lord's proof that there was no necessity for a reform in parliament. His next proof of the purity of parliament, and of the popularity of its present proceedings, was also curious. Some close boroughs, it seemed, had been thrown open; Cricklade and Shoreham, and one or two others, were thrown into the general mass of representation; and this was another proof that there was no necessity for a parliamentary reform. What did this motion go to? Why, to make this, which, in the opinion of the noble lord, was an excellent measure, in these few instances, a general measure. These two or three little instances were, in the opinion of the noble lord, a great acquisition to the people, but the making the measure general would be a great evil. But the question was now boldly put, where did the people see their grievances?

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They saw them in the extension of the excise laws. They saw them in the restraint that was put upon their speeches to each other. They saw them in the erection of barracks all over the kingdom. They saw them in the votes of the House of Commons, by which their money was squandered upon objects that were never defined. They saw them in the money that was sent away to the continent without the consent, or even knowledge of Parliament. Put these grievances into one side of the scale, and the little acquisitions of Mr. Grenville's bill, and the throwing open of a few paltry boroughs into the other, and he believed the noble lord himself, although by no means a bashful man in that House, would be ashamed to hold the balance. The noble lord dwelt a great deal on what he considered as a very powerful argument, namely, that as there was a contrariety of opinion as to the plan of a parliamentary reform, that must be considered as a proof that the evil did not exist; for that if it did, there would have been no difficulty about the remedy, that it must be clear. This reminded him of the adage, "when doctors differ, &c." If that was to be the answer, it would follow, that if doctors differ as to the remedy, the patient although he may appear to be dying, must be taken to be in perfect health. He knew not where the noble lord had studied his logic, but certain it was not from the college of physicians. There was one part of the complaint which never occurred to the noble lord. He touched upon the landed interest, he touched upon the interest of the boroughs, and most logically concluded, that there was no complaint against either; but it never entered into his mind that the minister would have too much interest with them all when assembled in the House of Commons. Here he was reminded by the words of a person whom it was hardly regular for him to quote, as a reverend prelate, who had said that "the parliament belongs to the crown. If that be so, he would say that he would not debate the remedy whatever it be, for he was ready to say that the House of Commons would be better in any hands than in the hands of the crown. But the noble lord had said, "show me that the close boroughs have done more harm than popular places." He did not know what the noble lord meant by harm. He could show him that the proprietors of these close boroughs had acted on a

system which must be cut up by the roots, or his country could not stand. He would say that they had bought boroughs, and afterwards voted away the money and the rights of the people, as if both had been their own absolute property. That there had been a man in that House who had seven or eight seats in it; that he was connected with the minister, and that, without one foot of land in Ireland, he was made an Irish peer. He could show him persons, who could not, indeed, buy men and sell them, because that was not yet to be done, but who bought and sold boroughs, and with them sold the dearest interests of the people. The noble lord, in part of his speech, put the close boroughs out of the question; indeed he would have acted judiciously in never taking notice of them, for they could not be of any service to his argument. But it seemed that ministers had met with support in the counties. He knew they had and it was a thing to be much lamented, that men of large wealth should quit the nearest and dearest connexions, they had for the purpose of following the dictates of a profligate minister; and, before any justice could be done to that part of the case, the noble lord must have counted all the coronets that have been given away by the present minister. Men who voted away all public principle for favours of this kind were the most profligate and contemptible characters in the kingdom. What if a county member knows that his name is entered in the pocket-book of the secretary of the treasury as a person to be called to the other House, and votes any thing that is desired of him in order to obtain that distinction. He knew many of that description. These were called men of honour, but they were the reverse of it, they were enemies to the nation in which they lived. They pretended to vote for the cause of justice, and humanity, and religion, when in point of fact they were only laughing at the public, and voting away their rights to serve their own ambition. That was a great reason why the people called for a parliamentary reform. It was to a conviction that most public men have nothing in view but their own personal advantage, was owing all the mischief that had lately happened to our service. It was upon that principle the sailors and the soldiers reasoned. The House would set them a better example by reforming parliament, if they had a spark of honour in them.

With regard to the question, as it had been argued by the chancellor of the exchequer, nothing was said upon the present representation of the people. The noble lord had fallen foul with all the doctrine which the chancellor of the exchequer had ever maintained upon reform, and he was sorry the chancellor of the exchequer had left the House; were he present, he most likely would have saved him a good deal of trouble in replying to many parts of the speech of the noble lord. A good deal had been said about throwing the country into confusion. The minister and his advocates affected to dread the principle of the present measure, because it seemed to proceed upon the Rights of Man, and because they said they were principles which had been adopted in the French revolution, and which principles led to so much horror. In this respect, he must deny that the horrors of the French revolution were produced by the Rights of Man. There were bloody calamities in France after the French revolution; nobody disputed it: but that these calamities were produced by those principles he disputed. There was not so much as one individual who was concerned either in writing or publishing any of their principles concerned in any one of the massacres in that country; and here he must repeat what he said on former occasions, that excess of conduct was the natural effect of all revolutions when men shook off their slavery. When men are under the necessity of recovering their liberty by force, they are naturally intemperate. Man was not born to have property in men: and if he persists in maintaining that he has, there is no wonder when he falls a victim to his own iniquity and presumption. This ought to be a lesson to us. If the question was put to him, who were the real authors and abettors of these massacres, he should place certain despots in the front of his accusation.

It was impossible for any thing to be more unjust than the view which the minister had thought fit to take of all the reformers to night. He asked the public to look upon them all as so many masked traitors. He denied the justice of that description of them. That there might be among them some men of mischievous intentions, no man would dispute; and when was any great public measure proposed, in which some characters would not mingle, but that they were considerable either in number or talents, was what

he did not believe. That he was no friend to such persons, but would, on the contrary, endeavour to detect them, he was entitled by what he had said this day on another subject, to ask the House to believe. But when the minister took the whole complexion of a meeting from the intemperate speeches of a few intoxicated or superficial individuals, who might casually attend a public meeting, it proved, what he had already said of the minister that he was ignorant of the nature of a popular assembly; how could he be otherwise? He never entered any assembly except the House of Commons, and that was the reason why he could not make a distinction between the honest intentions of the mass of a people, and the absurdities of a few.

But the minister had endeavoured to make a great deal of the difference that subsisted between the reformers; and he had said that all that had been urged upon reform when he was a party to it, was agreement itself compared to the discordance of late meetings. He thought that there was no harm in every man speaking openly what he thought upon the subject of parliamentary reform; he wished every man's heart to be legible in these times of danger; ingenuous openness was always, and at all times much better than concealment. He knew not why universal suffrage should have been brought into such contempt; he remembered at some meetings signing his name with the duke of Richmond in favour of universal suffrage and annual parliaments. He considered it as the right of every man to propose that, if he thought fit; the expediency of such a plan was matter for discussion and deliberation; if any other plan was better, there was no reason why it should not be preferred, but it seemed now to be treated as a species of treason; he confessed he knew not why, he was not at all ashamed of having signed it, there was no secrecy about the matter, it was published in all the newspapers; he thought this plan a better one; he thought also that the mass of the people would be satisfied with it; but that every man who thought universal suffrage the best plan, must necessarily wish for anarchy and confusion, was a thing which he would not admit. Some men claimed popularity as well as other advantages from their rank but they were deceived if they thought they could persecute others for following their opinions without being despised by the public. It had been stated, that the num-

ber of those who wished for a reform in parliament was small. He did not believe it. He believed that the whole body of Dissenters wished for a reform without pulling down the fabric of the constitution. He believed also, that the mass of the people of Scotland had the same wish; for at present the whole forty-five were returned by men who had some of them not an inch of land in that part of the island.

He was not much of an egotist, nor was he out of that House an arrogant man. He was almost ashamed of the praise the minister had bestowed upon him to day for merely doing his duty, when he spoke of the sailors. He hoped, and he trusted, that much calamity as this country feels, we shall never bend our necks to an insolent foe; but will, if necessary to a man, defend our rights with our lives. He must be indulged to say another word about himself, as it was now necessary. He had been accused of wishing to join with those who wish for anarchy. He would ask those who charged him with so foul a wish, what temptation he had to do so? What provocation had he to excite any opposition against the aristocracy of this land, or against its monarchy? He had possessed at one time some confidence from the monarch, during the time he filled an office of considerable trust. He had been honoured with the confidence of an illustrious personage. He had been treated with civility by many of the first families in this country. He knew no occasion he had to regret the attention he had received from that House. He had no desire to break a lance with any orator in any other place. He therefore expected credit for sincerity when he declared, that he supported this motion from his heart. because he thought in his conscience, it tended to restore to the people some of the purity of their originally excellent constitution, and to save the state from ruin.

Sir. *W. Young* declared himself to be an enemy of every plan he had ever heard suggested for the alteration of the form of the representation, and the present was, in his mind, as objectionable as all the preceding objects that had been submitted to the public. It was idle to contend, however they might be guarded, that every such plan would not finally extend to universal suffrage. It was in the nature of things that concessions being made to the multitude, they would take advantage and

turn it to their most extravagant designs. The example of France had presented a warning which he thought would have deterred us from this dangerous course of experiments. Not one of the persons who began the French revolution intended to push it to universal suffrage; but it was obvious that the degree of power which they gave to the people, made it impossible for them to prevent the abuse of it. In the specific plan which the hon. gentleman had suggested to-day, there were theories entirely inconsistent with perfect representation. Though it was intended to enlarge the representation of the small boroughs, yet he understood that the great cities and populous towns would be divided according to their population. In that case it was obvious that the inequalities would be detrimental to the public interest; the metropolis would have a preponderance over all the rest of the kingdom; London would be the Republic of England, as Paris was of France. He concluded by saying, that, in his mind, Providence seemed to hold out the instructive lesson to nations to avoid those dangerous theories, and to guard people against the extravagance of their own passions.

Mr. *Barham* said, that he had through life been an advocate for parliamentary reform, but he must object to the proposition which was this day presented to the House, and that for two distinct reasons. The first, that it was not called for in his opinion, by the majority of the people; and secondly, that it was not the proper time for agitating the important question. In a season of so much difficulty and alarm, he thought it unwise to call the attention of the House to a subject which must excite very strong emotions in the country, and create divisions injurious to the common exertion that was required for our common interest. When the proper time should come, and that it was obviously called for and demanded by the people, he should certainly think himself bound to give his countenance to a sober and well-digested scheme of reform, by which the House of Commons should be the efficient representative of the country.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that he felt it to be the indispensable duty of gentlemen to declare their opinions upon this highly important subject with clearness and precision. The time was come when the question of parliamentary reform could be no longer treated with indifference. It was of no account to examine, whether

the landed representation had the superiority over the commercial, or whether the commercial was greater than the landed, these were points of little importance; the question was, whether the crown had not a domineering influence over both? and if this should be made manifest, as in his conscience he believed it could, they ought not, nay, he would say more, they could not long resist the imperious demand of the people for a reform. That it was so, would require but little illustration; it was self-evident; one-third of the members of that House held places of trust and profit directly and openly under the crown. He did not mean to say, that they might not be very honourable men, and that they did not perform faithful service for their money; but he demanded to know, whether if the choice of representation was as free and as popular as it ought to be, it would be either probable or rational that the people of England should delegate a number of persons in the pay of the crown to watch, examine, and control the expenses of the crown? Was it likely that, when they were erecting a barrier between themselves and their rulers, they would choose the hired servants of government to constitute their barrier? Look at the fact. Had this third part of the House of Commons given their countenance to any one motion for an inquiry into the expenditure, into the gross extravagance and enormous abuse of the public money during this disastrous war? Had they joined in any one motion for censure upon the unconstitutional modes that had been practised in sending money out of the kingdom without the consent or knowledge of parliament? Here was, upon the face and exterior of our representation, a system, at least, of its being erroneous. It was a thing for which nothing but fundamental error in the system could account. There was another instance equally pregnant. By what fatality could it happen that the whole kingdom of Scotland had been of one mind in exercising the elective suffrage, if any elective suffrage they possessed, by what unaccountable circumstance was it, that all the members from that country were unanimous in their support of government? It could only arise from a positive defect in the system of the election; for where the voices of the elective body were free, there would be diversity of opinion. But it was said, how would a reform tend to

correct all the evils of our representation? He said he was free to confess, that mere reform in the plan of election would not suffice. But reform must be accompanied with regulations and checks for the correction of bribery and expense, by which the vitiated morals of the people might be corrected, and the scandalous profligacy of elections be removed. He did not by any means think this an impossible task, since he ascribed much of the popular degeneracy to the system and to the example that was given to the multitude. But it was said, at what point would you stop? who shall answer that you can stop at the point which the hon. gentleman has proposed in his plan? To this the answer was easy. If you concede in time, you may fix the bounds to which you will go. Protract the reform until calamity shall have made men desperate; and, in truth, it may be impossible to reform at all. It was asked, whether corporations should be touched, and whether it would be wise to suffer them to continue upon their present footing? The present was certainly not the precise moment for the inquiry. There was no plan for the elective franchise so good in its first aspect as that of giving it to housekeepers. That was the most obvious test of property upon the one side, and of selected population upon the other. It was urged as a proof, that the present House of Commons spoke the sense of the country; that at the general election the people had had in their power to choose men who had opposed the war; and that having done the contrary, was a proof of its being popular. Before this argument was admitted, it must be assumed that the voice of the people was free, and that the elections spoke their genuine sense. If that were true, there would be no necessity for reform. At the same time it was obvious, that in places where popular spirit did prevail, men gained or lost the election as they had opposed or supported the measure of the present war. He was himself an instance of this fact; and an hon. baronet had lost his election in the same place, substantively because he had given his countenance to the ministers in the present war. A good deal had been said about the meeting at the Crown and Anchor. He had attended that meeting, as he had generally attended almost every meeting for parliamentary reform for the last two and twenty years. He by no means con-

curred in thinking the present obloquy, which had been so lavishly thrown upon it, was deserved. He perceived in that meeting a very general and prevailing spirit of moderation. There was, to be sure, a great deal of noise and some confusion, but not more nor so much as he had frequently seen in that House when intemperate advocates for the measures of administration were bent upon calling for the question, and silencing by clamour all rational discussion.

Sir Gregory Page Turner craved the indulgence of the House for a few observations which he had to make. When he got up in the morning, and when he lay day down at night, he always felt for the constitution. On this question he never had but one opinion. When he came first into parliament, he remembered that the chancellor of the exchequer proposed a reform, but he saw it was wrong, and he opposed it. Would it not be madness to change what had been handed sound and entire down to the days of his father.

Mr. Pollen said, that he was convinced of the necessity and of the wisdom of a temperate reform of the representation of the people. It was in vain to contend against the exigency. Every man who went into a populous place at the time of an election, must be sensible that things could not go on on their present footing. Every hand was open for a bribe. All idea of a representation was scouted. It was a mere profligate scene of corruption, and consequently presented to government the certain means of influencing the majority in that House. He should certainly vote for the motion, by which time and opportunity would be given to discuss the merits of the proposed plan, and to adopt or reject it upon mature deliberation.

Mr. Fox said:—Much, and often, Sir, as this question has been discussed, and late as the hour is, I feel it my duty to deliver my opinion on a measure of high importance at all times, but which, at the present period, is become infinitely more interesting than ever. I fear, however, that my conviction on this subject is not common to the House. I fear that we are not likely to be agreed as to the importance of the measure, nor as to the necessity; since by the manner in which it has been discussed this night, I foresee that, so far from being unanimous on the proposition, we shall not be agreed as to the situation and circumstances of the

country itself, much less as to the nature of the measures which, in my mind, that situation and those circumstances imperiously demand. I cannot suppress my astonishment at the tone and manner of gentlemen this day. The arguments that have been used would lead the mind to believe that we are in a state of peace and tranquillity, and that we have no provocation to any steps for improving the benefits we enjoy, or retrieving any misfortune that we have incurred. To persons who feel this to be our situation, every proposition tending to meliorate the condition of the country must be subject of jealousy and alarm: and if we really differ so widely in sentiment as to the state of the country, I see no probability of an agreement in any measure that is proposed. All that part of the argument against reform which relates to the danger of innovation, is strangely misplaced by those who think with me, that, so far from procuring the mere chance of practical benefits by a reform, it is only by a reform that we can have a chance of rescuing ourselves from a state of extreme peril and distress. Such is my view of our situation. I think it so perilous, so imminent, that though I do not feel conscious of despair, an emotion which the heart ought not to admit, yet it comes near to that state of hazard, when the sentiment of despair, rather than of hope, may be supposed to take possession of the mind. I feel myself to be the member of a community, in which the boldest man, without any imputation of cowardice, may dread that we are not merely approaching to a state of extreme peril, but of absolute dissolution; and with this conviction impressed upon my mind, gentlemen will not believe that I disregard all the general arguments that have been used against the motion on the score of the danger of innovation, from any disrespect to the honourable members who have urged them, or to the ingenuity with which they have been pressed; but because I am firmly persuaded that they are totally inapplicable to the circumstances under which we come to the discussion. With the ideas that I entertain, I cannot listen for a moment to suggestions that are applicable only to other situations, and to other times; for unless we are resolved pusillanimously to wait the approach of our doom, to lie down and die, we must take bold and decisive measures for our deliverance. We must not be deterred by meaner apprehensions.

We must combine all our strength, fortify one another by the communion of our courage; and by a seasonable exertion of national wisdom, patriotism, and vigour, take measures for the chance of salvation, and encounter with unappalled hearts, all the enemies, foreign and internal, all the dangers and calamities of every kind which press so heavily upon us. Such is my view of our present emergency; and under this impression, I cannot for a moment listen to the argument of danger arising from innovation, since our ruin is inevitable, if we pursue the course which has brought us to the brink of the precipice.

But before I enter on the subject of the proposition that has been made to us, I must take notice of an insinuation that has again and again been flung out by gentlemen on the other side of the House, on party feelings, in which they affect to deplore the existence of a spirit injurious to the welfare of the public. I suspect, by the frequent repetition of this insinuation, that they are desirous of making it be believed, or that they understand themselves by the word party feelings, an unprincipled combination of men for the pursuit of office and its emoluments, the eagerness after which leads them to act upon feelings of personal enmity, ill-will, and opposition to his majesty's ministers. If such be their interpretation of party feelings, I must say, that I am utterly unconscious of any such feeling, and I am sure that I can speak with confidence for my friends, that they are actuated by no motives of so debasing a nature. But if they understand by party feelings, that men of honour, who entertain similar principles, conceive that those principles may be more beneficially and successfully pursued by the force of mutual support, harmony, and confidential connexion, then I adopt the interpretation, and have no scruple in saying, that it is an advantage to the country; an advantage to the cause of truth and the constitution; an advantage to freedom and humanity; an advantage to whatever honourable object they may be engaged in, that men pursue it with the united force of party feeling; that is to say, pursue it with the confidence, zeal, and spirit, which the communion of just confidence is likely to inspire. And if the hon. gentleman apply this description of party feeling to the pursuit in which we are engaged, I am equally ready to say, that the disastrous

condition of the empire ought to animate and invigorate the union of all those who feel it to be their duty to check and arrest a career that threatens us with such inevitable ruin. For, surely, those who think that party is a good thing for ordinary occasions, must admit that it is peculiarly so on emergencies like the present; it is peculiarly incumbent upon men who feel the value of united exertion to combine all their strength to extricate the vessel when it is in danger of being stranded.

But gentlemen seem to insinuate, that this union of action is directed more against persons than measures, and that allusions ought not to be made to the conduct of particular men. It is not easy to analyse this sort of imputation, for it is not easy to disjoin the measure from its author, nor to examine the origin and progress of any evil without also inquiring into and scrutinising the motives and the conduct of the persons who gave rise to it. How, for instance, is it possible for us to enter into the discussion of the particular question now before the House, without a certain mixture of personal allusion? We complain that the representation of the people in parliament is defective. How does this complaint originate? From the conduct of the majorities in parliament. Does not this naturally lead us to inquire whether there is not something fundamentally erroneous in elections or something incidentally vicious in the treatment of those majorities? We surely must be permitted to inquire whether the fault and calamity of which we complain is inherent in the institution, in which nothing personal is to be ascribed to ministers, as it will operate in a more or less degree in all the circumstances in which we may find ourselves; or whether it is not an occasional abuse of the original institution, applicable only to these times and to these men, in which they are peculiarly guilty, but from which system representation itself ought to stand absolved.

I put the question in this way, in order to show that a certain degree of personality is inseparable from the discussion, and that gentlemen cannot with justice ascribe to the bitterness of party feelings, what flows out of the principle of free inquiry. Indeed, this is a pregnant example of there being nothing peculiarly hostile to persons in this subject; it is not a thing now taken up for the first time, meditated and con-

ceived in particular hostility to the right hon. the chancellor of the exchequer. Be it remembered, that he himself has again and again introduced and patronized the same subject, and that on all the occasions on which he has brought it forward it has invariably received my approbation and support. When he brought it forward first in the year 1782, in a time of war, and of severe public calamity, I gave to the proposition my feeble support.* Again, when he brought it forward in 1783, at a time when I was in an office high in his majesty's service, I gave it my support.* Again, in 1785, when the right hon. gentleman himself was in place, and renewed his proposition, it had my countenance and support.* I have invariably declared myself a friend to parliamentary reform by whomsoever proposed; and though in all the discussions that have taken place, I have had occasion to express my doubt as to the efficacy of the particular mode, I have never hesitated to say, that the principle itself was beneficial; and that though not called for with the urgency which some persons, and, among others, the right hon. gentleman, declared to exist, I constantly was of opinion that it ought not to be discouraged. Now, however, that all doubt upon the subject is removed by the pressure of our calamities, and the dreadful alternative seems to be, whether we shall sink into the most abject thralldom, or continue in the same course until we are driven into the horrors of anarchy, I can have no hesitation in saying, that the plan of recurring to the principle of melioration which the constitution points out, is become a *desideratum* to the people of Great Britain. Between the alternatives of base and degraded slavery on the one side, or of tumultuous, though, probably, short-lived anarchy on the other, though no man would hesitate to make his choice, yet, if there be a course obvious and practicable, which, without either violence or innovation, may lead us back to the vigour we have lost, to the energy that has been stifled, to the independence that has been undermined, and yet preserve every thing in its place, a moment ought not to be lost in embracing the chance which this fortunate provision of the British system has made for British safety.

This is my opinion, and it is not an

* See Vol. 22, p. 1416; Vol. 23, p. 826; and Vol. 25, p. 432.

opinion merely founded upon theory, but upon actual observation of what is passing in the world. I conceive, that if we are not resolved to shut our eyes to the instructive lessons of the times, we must be convinced of the propriety of seasonable concession. I see nothing in what is called the lamentable example of France to prove to me that timely acquiescence with the desires of the people is more dangerous than obstinate resistance to their demands; but the situations of Great Britain and France are so essentially different, there is so little in common between the character of England at this day, and the character of France at the commencement of the Revolution, that it is impossible to reason upon them from parity of circumstances or of character. It is not necessary for me, I am sure, to enter into any analysis of the essential difference between the character of a people that had been kept for ages in the barbarism of servitude, and a people who have enjoyed for so long a time the light of freedom. But we have no occasion to go to France for example; another country nearer to our hearts, with which we are better acquainted, opens to us a book so legible and clear, that he must be blind indeed who is not able to draw from it warning and instruction; it holds forth a lesson which is intelligible to dulness itself. Let us look to Ireland, and see how remarkably the arguments and reasoning of this day tally with the arguments and reasoning that unfortunately prevailed in the sister kingdom, and by which the king's ministers were fatally able to overpower the voice of reason and patriotism, and stifle all attention to the prayers and applications of the people. It is impossible for any coincidence to be more perfect. We are told, that there are in England, as it is said there were in Ireland, a small number of persons desirous of throwing the country into confusion, and of alienating the affections of the people from the established government.

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, in passing, to observe, that the right hon. gentleman did not represent my learned friend (Mr. Erskine) quite correctly, when he stated that my learned friend admitted the existence of such men. On the contrary, the argument of my learned friend was hypothetical; he said, if it be true, as it is so industriously asserted, that such and such men do exist in the country, then surely in wisdom you ought to prevent their

number from increasing by timely conciliation of the body of moderate men, who desire only reform. In this opinion I perfectly acquiesce with my learned friend. I believe that the number of persons who are discontented with the government of the country, and who desire to overthrow it, is very few, indeed. But the right hon. gentleman says, that the friends of moderate reform are few, and that no advantage is to be gained by conceding to this very small body what will not satisfy the violent, which he contends is more numerous; and he vehemently demands to know whom he is to divide, whom to separate, and what benefit he is to obtain from this surrender? To this I answer, that if there be two bodies, it is wisdom, it is policy, to prevent the one from falling into the other, by granting to the moderate what is just and reasonable. If the argument of the right hon. gentleman be correct, the necessity for concession is more imperious; it is only by these means that you can check the spirit of proselytism, and prevent a conversion that by-and-by will be too formidable for you to resist. Mark this, and see how it applies to the precedent of Ireland. In the report that has been made by the parliament of that kingdom on the present disorders, it is said, that so long ago as the year 1791, there existed some societies in that country, who harboured the desire of separation from England, and who wished to set up a republican form of government. The report does not state what was the precise number of those societies in 1791; it declares, however, that the number was small and insignificant. From small beginnings, however, they have increased to the alarming number of 100,000 men in the province of Ulster only. By what means have they so increased, and who are the proselytes that swell their numbers to so gigantic a size? Obviously the men who had no such design originally; obviously the persons who had no other object in view in all the petitions which they presented, than Catholic emancipation and reform in parliament. This is also admitted by the report. The spirit of reform spread over the country; they made humble, earnest, and repeated applications to the castle for redress; but there they found a fixed determination to resist every claim, and a rooted aversion to every thing that bore even the colour of reform. They made their applications to all the considerable charac-

ters in the country, who had on former occasions distinguished themselves by exertions in the popular cause: and of these justly eminent men I desire to speak as I feel, with the utmost respect for their talents and virtues. But, unfortunately, they were so alarmed by the French revolution, and by the cry which had been so artfully set up by ministers of the danger of infection, that they could not listen to the complaint. What was the consequence? These bodies of men, who found it vain to expect it from the government at the castle, or from the parliament, and having no where else to recur for redress, joined the societies, whom the report accuses of cherishing the desire of separation from England; and became converts to all those notions of extravagant and frantic ambition, which the report lays to their charge, and which threatens consequences so dreadful and alarming, that no man can contemplate them without horror and dismay.

What, then, is the lesson to be derived from this example, but that the comparatively small societies of 1791 became strong and formidable by the accession of the many who had nothing in common with them in the outset? I wish it were possible for us to draw the line more accurately between the small number that the report describes to have had mischievous objects originally in view, and the numerous bodies who were made converts by the neglect of their petition for constitutional rights. Is it improbable that the original few were not more than ten or twenty thousand in number? What, then, do I learn from this? That the impolitic and unjust refusal of government, to attend to the applications of the moderate, made 80 or 90,000 proselytes from moderation to violence. This is the lesson which the book of Ireland exhibits! Can you refuse your assent to the moral? Will any man argue, that if reform had been conceded to the 80 or 90,000 moderate petitioners, you would have this day to deplore the union of 100,000 men, bent on objects so extensive, so alarming, so calamitous? I wish to warn you by this example. Every argument that you have heard used this day was used at Dublin. In the short sighted pride and obstinacy of the government, they turned a deaf ear to the suppliant; they have now, perhaps, in the open field to brave the assertor. Unwarned, untutored by example, are you still to go on with the

same contemptuous and stubborn pride? I by no means think that Great Britain is at this moment in the same situation as Ireland. I by no means think that the discontents of this country have risen to such a height as to make us fear for the general peace of the country; but I deprecate the course which has been pursued in Ireland. What England is now, Ireland was in 1791. What was said of the few, they have now applied to the many; and as there are discontents in this country, which we can neither dissemble nor conceal, let us not, by an unwise and criminal disdain, irritate and fret them into violence and disorder. The discontents may happily subside; but a man must be sanguine indeed in his temper, or dull in his intellect, if he would leave to the operation of chance what he might more certainly obtain by the exercise of reason. Every thing that is dear and urgent to the minds of Englishmen presses upon us; in the critical moment at which I now address you, a day, an hour, ought not to elapse, without giving to ourselves the chance of this recovery. When government is daily presenting itself in the shape of weakness that borders on dissolution—unequal to all the functions of useful strength, and formidable only in pernicious corruption—weak in power, and strong only in influence—am I to be told that such a state of things can go on with safety to any branch of the constitution? If men think that, under the impression of such a system, we can go on without a recurrence to first principles, they argue in direct opposition to all theory and all practice. These discontents cannot, in their nature, subside under detected weakness and exposed incapacity. In their progress and increase (and increase they must), who shall say that direction can be given to the torrent, or that, having broken its bounds, it can be kept from overwhelming the country? Sir, it is not the part of statesmen, it is not the part of rational beings, to amuse ourselves with such fallacious dreams; we must not sit down and lament over our hapless situation; we must not deliver ourselves up to an imbecile despondency that would animate the approach of danger; but by a seasonable and vigorous measure of wisdom, meet it with a sufficient and seasonable remedy. We may be disappointed. We may fail in the application, for no man can be certain of his footing on ground that is unexplored;

but we shall at least have a chance for success—we shall at least do what belong to legislators, and to rational beings on the occasion, and I have confidence that our efforts would not be in vain. I say that we should give ourselves a chance, and, I may add, the best chance, for deliverance; since it would exhibit to the country a proof that we had conquered the first great difficulty that stood in the way of bettering our condition—that we had conquered ourselves. We had given a generous triumph to reason over prejudice; we had given a death blow to those miserable distinctions of whig and tory, under which the warfare had been maintained between pride and privilege; and through the contention of our rival jealousies, the genuine rights of the many had been gradually undermined, and frittered away. I say, that this would be giving us the best chance; because, seeing every thing go on from bad to worse—seeing the progress of the most scandalous waste countenanced by the most criminal confidence, and that the effrontery of corruption no longer requires the mask of concealment—seeing liberty daily infringed, and the vital springs of the nation insufficient for the extravagance of a dissipated government, I must believe, that, unless the people are mad or stupid, they will suspect that there is something fundamentally vicious in our system, and which no reform would be equal to correct. Then, to prevent all this, and to try if we can effect a reform without touching the main pillars of the constitution, without changing its forms, or disturbing the harmony of its parts, without putting any thing out of its place, or affecting the securities which we justly hold to be so sacred, is, I say, the only chance which we have for retrieving our misfortunes by the road of quiet and tranquillity, and by which national strength may be recovered without disturbing the property of a single individual.

It has been said, that the House possesses the confidence of the country as much as ever. This, in truth, is as much as to say, that his majesty's ministers possess the confidence of the country in the same degree as ever, since the majority of the House support and applaud the measures of the government, and give their countenance to all the evils which we are doomed to endure. I was very much surprised to hear any proposition so unaccountable advanced by any person

connected with ministers, particularly as the noble lord (Hawkesbury) had, but a sentence or two before, acknowledged that there had been, to be sure, a number of petitions presented to his majesty for the dismissal of his ministers. The one assertion is utterly incompatible with the other, unless he means to assert, that the petitions which have been presented to the throne are of no importance. The noble lord can hardly, I think, speak in this contemptuous manner of the petitions from Middlesex, London, Westminster, Surrey, Hampshire, York, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and many other places, unless he means to insinuate that they are proofs only of our very great industry, and that they are not the genuine sense of the districts from which they come. If the noble lord ascribes them to our industry, he gives us credit for much more merit of that kind than we are entitled to. It certainly is not the peculiar characteristic of the present opposition, that they are very industrious in agitating the public mind. But, grant to the noble lord his position—be it to our industry that all these petitions are to be ascribed. If industry could procure them, was it our moderation, our good will and forbearance, that have made us for fourteen years relax from this industry, and never bring forward these petitions until now? No, Sir, it is not to our industry that they are to be ascribed now, nor to our forbearance that they did not come before. The noble lord will not give us credit for this forbearance; and the consequence is, that he must own, upon his imputation of industry, that the present is the first time when we were sure of the people, and that these petitions are a proof that at length the confidence of the people in ministers are shaken. That it is so, it is in vain for the noble lord to deny. They who in former times were eager to show their confidence by addresses, have now been as eager to express their disapprobation in petitions for their removal. How, then, can we say that the confidence of the people is not shaken? Is confidence to be always against the people, and never for them? It is a notable argument, that because we do not find, at the general election, very material changes in the representation, the sentiments of the people continue the same, in favour of the war, and in favour of his majesty's ministers. The very ground of the present discussion gives the answer to this

argument. Why do we agitate the question of parliamentary reform? Why, but because a general election does not afford to the people the means of expressing their voice; because this House is not a sufficient representative of the people? Gentlemen are fond of arguing in this circle. When we contend that ministers have not the confidence of the people, they tell us that parliament is the faithful representative of the sense of the country. When we assert that the representation is defective, and show, from the petitions to the throne, that the House does not speak the voice of the people, they turn to the general election, and say, that at this period they had an opportunity of choosing faithful organs of their opinion; and because very little or no change has taken place in the representation, the sense of the people must be the same. Sir, it is in vain for gentlemen to shelter themselves by this mode of reasoning. We assert, that under the present form and practice of elections, we cannot expect to see any remarkable change produced by a general election. We must argue from experience. Let us look back to the period of the American war. It will not be denied by the right hon. gentleman, that towards the end of that war, it became extremely unpopular, and that the king's ministers lost the confidence of the nation. In the year 1780, a dissolution took place, and then it was naturally imagined by superficial observers, who did not examine the real state of representation, that the people would have returned a parliament that would have unequivocally spoken their sentiments on the occasion. What was the case? I am able to speak with considerable precision. At that time I was much more than I am at present in the way of knowing personally the individuals returned, and of making an accurate estimate of the accession gained to the popular side by that election. I can take upon me to say, that the change was very small indeed: not more than three or four persons were added to the number of those who had from the beginning opposed the disastrous career of the ministers in that war. I remember that, upon that occasion, lord North made use of precisely the same argument as is now brought forward: "What!" said he, "can you contend the war is unpopular, after the declaration in its favour that the people have made by their choice of re-

representatives? The general election is the proof that the war continues to be the war of the people of England." Such was the argument of lord North, and yet ~~it~~ was notoriously otherwise; so notoriously otherwise, that the right hon. gentleman, the present chancellor of the exchequer, made a just and striking use of it, to demonstrate the necessity of a parliamentary reform. He referred to this event as to a demonstration of this doctrine. "You see," said he, "that so defective, so inadequate, is the present practice, at least of the elective franchise that no impression of national calamity, no conviction of ministerial error, no abhorrence of disastrous war, is sufficient to stand against that corrupt influence which has mixed itself with election, and which drowns and stifles the popular voice." Upon this statement, and upon this unanswerable argument, the right hon. gentleman acted in the year 1782. When he proposed a parliamentary reform, he did it expressly on the ground of the experience of 1780, and he made an explicit declaration, that we had no other security by which to guard ourselves against the return of the same evils. He repeated this warning in 1783 and in 1785. It was the leading principle of his conduct. "Without a reform," said he "the nation cannot be safe; this war may be put an end to, but what will protect you against another? as certainly as the spirit which engendered the present war, actuates the secret councils of the crown, will you, under the influence of a defective representation, be involved again in new wars, and in similar calamities." This was his prophecy, and the right hon. gentleman was a true prophet. Precisely as he pronounced it, the event happened; another war took place, and I am sure it will not be considered as an aggravation of its character, that it is at least equal in disaster to the war of which the right hon. gentleman complained. "The defect of representation," he said, "is the national disease; and unless you apply a remedy directly to that disease, you must inevitably take the consequences with which it is pregnant." With such an authority, can any man deny that I reason right? Did not the right hon. gentleman demonstrate his case? Good God! what a fate is that of the right hon. gentleman, and in what a state of whimsical contradiction does he stand! During the whole course of his

administration, and particularly during the course of the present war, every prediction that he has made, every hope that he has held out, every prophecy that he has hazarded, has failed; he has disappointed the expectations that he has raised; and every promise that he has given, has proved to be fallacious. Yet for these very declarations, and notwithstanding these failures, we have called him a wise minister. We have given him our confidence on account of his predictions, and have continued it upon their failure. The only instance in which he really predicted what has come to pass, we treated with stubborn incredulity. In 1785, he pronounced the awful prophecy, "Without a parliamentary reform the nation will be plunged into new wars; without a parliamentary reform you cannot be safe against bad ministers, nor can even good ministers be of use to you." Such was his prediction; and it has come upon us. It would seem as if the whole life of the right hon. gentleman, from that period had been destined by Providence for the illustration of his warning. If I were disposed to consider him as a real enthusiast, and a bigot in divination, we might be apt to think that he had himself taken measures for the verification of his prophecy. For he might now exclaim to us, with the proud fervour of success, "You see the consequence of not listening to the oracle. I told you what would happen; it is true that your destruction is complete: I have plunged you into a new war; I have exhausted you as a people; I have brought you to the brink of ruin, but I told you before-hand what would happen; I told you, that without a reform in the representation of the people, no minister, however wise, could save you; you denied me my means, and you take the consequence!"

But a reform in the representation, say gentlemen on the opposite side of the House, is not called for by the country; and though meetings have been held in various parts of the kingdom, and petitions have come up for the dismissal of ministers, they have not expressed a wish for reform. In answer to this argument it is only necessary to observe, that the restrictions which have been recently laid on meetings of the people and on popular discussion, may serve to account for the question of reform not being mixed with that which was the subject of their immediate consideration. The purpose of the

meeting is necessarily specified in the requisition to the sheriff; and if any other business were attempted to be brought forward, the sheriff would have the power of dispersing the meeting. Their silence, therefore, upon the subject is no proof either way. But granting even the fact, that the country does not now call for this reform—a fact which, however, I deny—is the country in such a situation as to make it improbable that the universal demand of a parliamentary reform, which has burst from the people of Ireland will not be speedily communicated by sympathy to the people of England? When I see that the treatment which the people of Ireland have received upon this subject, has exasperated their minds to such a degree as to throw the whole of that kingdom into confusion, and that we have daily to dread the danger of actual insurrection, shall I not take measures to prevent the rise of a passion that may swell into equal tumult? The nearness of the two countries, the sympathetic interest, the similarity of language, of constitution, and almost of suffering, make it probable that the one nation will catch the disease of the other, unless we interpose a seasonable cure. Is it not wisdom, is it not prudence to erect a standard around which all the patriotism and moderation of the kingdom may rally, and the government be strengthened against the violence of the few by the countenance and support of the many?

The right hon. gentleman speaks, Sir, of the strength of government. But what symptom of strength does it exhibit? Is it the cordiality of all the branches of the national force? Is it the harmony that happily reigns in all the departments of the executive power? Is it the reciprocal affection that subsists between the government and the people? Is it in the energy with which the people are eager to carry into execution the measures of the administration, from the heart-felt conviction that they are founded in wisdom, favourable to their own freedom, and calculated for national happiness? Is it because our resources are flourishing and untouched, because our vigour is undiminished, because our spirit is animated by success, and our courage by our glory? Is it because government have in a perilous situation, when they have been obliged to call upon the country for sacrifices, shown a conciliating tenderness and regard for the rights of

the people, as well as a marked disinterestedness and forbearance on their own parts, by which they have, in an exemplary manner made their own economy to keep pace with the increased demands for the public service? Are these the sources of the strength of government? I forbear, Sir, to push the inquiry. I forbear to allude more particularly to symptoms which no man can contemplate at this moment without grief and dismay. It is not the declarations of right hon. gentlemen that constitute the strength of a government. That government alone is strong that possesses the hearts of the people; and will any man contend that we should not be more likely to add strength to the state, if we were to extend the basis of the popular representation? Would not a House of Commons, freely elected, be more likely to conciliate the support of the people? If this be true in the abstract, it is certainly our peculiar duty to look for this support in the hour of difficulty. What man who foresees a hurricane is not desirous of strengthening his house? Shall nations alone be blind to the dictates of reason? Let us not, Sir, be deterred from this act of prudence by the false representations that are made to us. France is the phantom that is constantly held out to terrify us from our purpose. Look at France; it will not be denied but that she stands on the broad basis of free representation. Whatever other views the government of France may exhibit, and which may afford just alarm to other nations, it cannot be denied that her representative system has proved itself capable of vigorous exertion.

Now, Sir, though I do not wish you to imitate France, and though I am persuaded you have no necessity for any terror of such imitation being forced upon you, yet I say that you ought to be as ready to adopt the virtues, as you are steady in averting from the country, the vices of France. If it is clearly demonstrated, that genuine representation alone can give solid power, and that in order to make government strong, the people must make the government; you ought to act on this grand maxim of political wisdom thus demonstrated, and call in the people, according to the original principles of your system, to the strength of your government. In doing this you will not innovate, you will not imitate. In making the people of England a constituent part

of the government of England, you do no more than restore the genuine edifice designed and framed by our ancestors. An hon. baronet spoke of the instability of democracies, and says, that history does not give us the example of one that has lasted eighty years. Sir, I am not speaking of pure democracies, and therefore his allusion does not apply to my argument. Eighty years, however, of peace and repose would be pretty well for any people to enjoy, and would be no bad recommendation of a pure democracy. I am ready, however, to agree with the honourable baronet, that, according to the experience of history, the ancient democracies of the world were vicious and objectionable on many accounts; their instability, their injustice, and many other vices, cannot be overlooked; but, surely, when we turn to the ancient democracies of Greece, when we see them in all the splendour of arts and of arms, when we see to what an elevation they carried the powers of man, it cannot be denied that, however vicious on the score of ingratitude or of injustice, they were, at least, the pregnant source of national strength, and that in particular they brought forth this strength in a peculiar manner in the moment of difficulty and distress. When we look at the democracies of the ancient world, we are compelled to acknowledge their oppressions to their dependencies, their horrible acts of injustice and of ingratitude to their own citizens; but they compel us also to admiration by their vigour, their constancy, their spirit, and their exertions in every great emergency in which they are called upon to act. We are compelled to own, that it gives a power, of which no other form of government is capable. Why? Because it incorporates every man with the state, because it arouses every thing that belongs to the soul, as well as to the body of man: because it makes every individual feel that he is fighting for himself, and not for another; that it is his own cause, his own safety, his own concern, his own dignity on the face of the earth, and his own interest on the identical soil which he has to maintain, and accordingly we find that whatever may be objected to them on account of the turbulency of the passions which they engender, their short duration, and their disgusting vices, they have exacted from the common suffrage of mankind the palm of strength and vigour. Who that reads the history of the Persian war—what boy,

whose heart is warmed by the grand and sublime actions which the democratic spirit produced, does not find in this principle the key to all the wonders which were achieved at Thermopylæ and elsewhere, and of which the recent and marvellous acts of the French people are pregnant examples? He sees that the principle of liberty only could create the sublime and irresistible emotion; and it is in vain to deny, from the striking illustration that our own times have given, that the principle is eternal, and that it belongs to the heart of man. Shall we then, refuse to take the benefit of this invigorating principle. Shall we refuse to take the benefit which the wisdom of our ancestors resolved that it should confer on the British constitution? With the knowledge that it can be reinfused into our system without violence, without disturbing any one of its parts, are we become so inert, so terrified, or so stupid, as to hesitate for one hour to restore ourselves to the health which it would be sure to give? When we see the giant power that it confers upon others, we ought not to withhold it from Great Britain. How long is it since we were told in this House, that France was a blank in the map of Europe, and that she lay an easy prey to any power that might be disposed to divide and plunder her? Yet we see that, by the mere force and spirit of this principle, France has brought all Europe at her feet. Without disguising the vices of France, without overlooking the horrors that have been committed, and that have tarnished the glory of the revolution, it cannot be denied that they have exemplified the doctrine, that if you wish for power you must look to liberty. If ever there was a moment when this maxim ought to be dear to us, it is the present. We have tried all other means; we have had recourse to every stratagem that artifice, that influence, that cunning could suggest; we have addressed ourselves to all the base passions of the nation; we have addressed ourselves to pride, to avarice, to fear; we have awakened all the interested emotions; we have employed every thing that flattery, every thing that address, every thing that privilege could effect; we have tried to terrify them into exertion, and all has been unequal to our emergency. Let us try them by the only means which experience demonstrates to be invincible; let us address ourselves to their love; let us identify them with ourselves: let us make it their

own cause as well as ours! To induce them to come forward in support of the state, let us make them a part of the state; and this they become the very instant you give them a House of Commons that is the faithful organ of their will. Then, Sir, when you have made them believe and feel that there can be but one interest in the country, you will never call upon them in vain for exertion. Can this be the case as the House of Commons is now constituted? Can they think so if they review the administration of the right hon. gentleman, every part of which must convince them, that the present representation is a mockery and a shadow?

I shall not, Sir, go over the whole of that series of disastrous measures which has forced upon the country the impression that the House of Commons has lost its efficacy in the system of government. But let us look back to the very singular circumstances under which the right hon. gentleman came into power: from this we shall see in what estimation the House of Commons is held, even by government itself, when it does not suit their purpose to extol it as the representative of the people. The right hon. gentleman came into power against the sense of the majority of the then House of Commons; and, armed with all the corrupt power of the crown, he stood, and successfully resisted the power of the House of Commons. He declared, that it was not the representative of the people, that it did not speak the sense of the nation, and he derided its weakness and inefficiency. What is the doctrine that this conduct in 1784 promulgated? That the House of Commons, so long as it obeys the will of the minister, so long as it grants every thing which he demands, so long as it supports every measure which he brings forward, is the genuine representative of the country—so long it is powerful and omnipotent: but, the moment that a House of Commons presumes to be the censor of government, the moment that it assumes the character of defiance and opposition, from that instant it ceases to have power or authority in the kingdom—it then becomes a straw which the minister can puff away with a breath. This he did in 1784, and completed his triumph. Since that time, who will say that the corrupt influence of the crown has not made enormous strides in destroying the power of election? Since that time, four-fifths of the elective franchises of Scotland, and Cornwall particu-

larly, have passed into the hands of government; and the prediction which Mr. Burke then made upon the occasion has been literally fulfilled—no House of Commons has been since found strong enough to oppose the ministers of the crown. It has been said, that that period was not proper to be taken as a test of the public spirit on the subject of representation; that it was a moment of national prosperity, and that nothing can be decided for or against representation by that precedent. It was, however, in that moment that the seeds of rottenness and dissolution were sown. I thought I saw them at the time, and I have been confirmed in my observation by every thing that has occurred since. I pass over all the period between that time up to the present war, not because it is not fruitful of examples, but because I do not wish to trespass upon your time. The present war, say ministers, was popular in its commencement; the same was said of the commencement of the American war. I will not stop to inquire into the truth of the assertion, though it is at least doubtful. I will not deny that, through the artful machinations of government, a clamour was excited of the interested, which ministers called the voice of the nation. Whatever may have been the case, however, in the outset of the two wars, the progress in the public opinion has been the same in both; and I aver, that as in the American war the public opinion had changed, though no change was produced by the general election of 1780, so now, for the last two years, the present war has been universally unpopular in England, though it has not made its voice to be heard in the choice of representatives. Though the general election has not produced a change of men, yet he must be a dull observer of the public mind who says that the general election did not afford a striking proof of a change in the sentiments of the people. For what was the conduct of the candidates in populous places on the two sides? We boasted of having opposed the war; we made it our claim and our appeal to the confidence of the people, that we had resisted every one of the measures by which the government has brought us into our present condition. What was the conduct of the candidates on the other side? It consisted of apologies for their past offence of supporting the war; it consisted of whining and canting explanations, in descriptions of alarms,

and not unfrequently in misrepresentations of facts. Such was the feeling conveyed by the general election. It served to convince every observing man, that if the representative system had been perfect, or the practice pure, the new parliament would have decidedly voted against the continuance of the war. Seeing, then, the conduct they have pursued, can the people have confidence in this House? Can they have confidence in a House that has given their countenance to misrepresentation through the whole course of the war? Suppose the people were to look for the history of the events that have happened in this war, and for the condition of the country, to the king's speeches from the throne, and to the addresses of the two Houses of parliament; they would see that almost in every instance his majesty has declared from the throne, and the House of Commons has replied in humble addresses, that our prospects were improved, and that the country was flourishing and prosperous. Look at all the king's speeches and addresses since the year 1793, and you will find that this is their general tone and language. And yet, this is the House of Commons in which the people of England are to have confidence! Amidst all the failures and sufferings which they have had to deplore, and in their present condition of dreadful and unparalleled calamity, they are called upon to trust to a House of Commons, that assures them their prospects and situation have been gradually improving since the year 1793!

There has been, at different times, a great deal of dispute about virtual representation. Sir, I am no great advocate for these nice subtleties and special pleadings on the constitution; much depends upon appearance as well as reality. I know well that a popular body of 558 gentlemen, if truly independent of the crown, would be a strong barrier to the people; but the House of Commons should not only be, but appear to be, the representatives of the people; the system should satisfy the prejudices and the pride, as well as the reason of the people; and you never can expect to give the just impression which a House of Commons ought to make on the people, until you derive it unequivocally from them. It is asked, why gentlemen, who were against a parliamentary reform on former occasions, should vote for it now? Ten years ago, men might reasonably object to any re-

form of the system, who ought now, in my opinion, to be governed by motives that are irresistible in its favour. They might look back with something like satisfaction and triumph to former parliaments, and console themselves with the reflection, that though, in moments of an ordinary kind, in the common course of human events, parliament might abate from its vigilance, and give a greater degree of confidence than was strictly conformable with representative duty—yet there was a point beyond which no artifice of power, no influence of corruption, could carry them; that there were barriers in the British constitution, over which the House of Commons never would leap, and that the moment of danger and alarm would be the signal for the return of parliament to its post. Such might have been the reasoning of gentlemen on the experience of former parliaments; and with this rooted trust in the latent efficacy of parliament, they might have objected to any attempt that should cherish hopes of a change in the system itself. But what will the same gentlemen say after the experience of the last and the present parliament? What reliance can they have for any one vestige of the constitution that is yet left to us? Or rather, what privilege, what right, what security, has not been already violated?—"quid intactum nefasti liquimus?" And, seeing that in no one instance have they hesitated to go the full length of every outrage that was conceived by the minister—that they have been touched by no scruples—deterred by no sense of duty—corrected by no experience of calamity—checked by no admonition or remonstrance—that they have never made out a single case of inquiry—that they have never interposed a single restraint upon abuse, may not gentlemen consistently feel that the reform which they previously thought unnecessary is now indispensable?

We have heard to-day, Sir, all the old arguments about honour on the one side being as likely as honour on the other; that there are good men on both sides of the House; that a man may be a member for a close borough upon the one side of the House, as well as upon the other; and that he may be a good man, sit where he may. All this, Sir, is very idle language; it is not the question at issue. No man disputes the existence of private and individual integrity; but, Sir, this is not representation. If a man comes here

as the proprietor of a burgage tenure, he does not come here as the representative of the people. The whole of this system, as it is now carried on, is as outrageous to morality, as it is pernicious to just government; it gives a scandal to our character, which not merely degrades the House of Commons in the eyes of the people; it does more, it undermines the very principles of integrity in their hearts, and gives a fashion to dishonesty and imposture. They hear of a person giving or receiving four or five thousand pounds as the purchase money of a seat for a close borough; and they hear the very man, who received and put into his pocket the money, make a vehement speech in this House against bribery; and they see him move for the commitment to prison of a poor, unfortunate wretch at your bar, who has been convicted in taking a single guinea for his vote in the very borough, perhaps, where he had publicly and unblushingly sold his influence, though that miserable guinea was necessary to save a family from starving, under the horrors of a war which he had contributed to bring upon the country. Sir, these are the things that paralyze you to the heart; these are the things that vitiate the whole system, that spread degeneracy, hypocrisy, and sordid fraud, over the country, and take from us the energies of virtue, and sap the foundations of patriotism and spirit. The system that encourages so much vice ought to be put an end to; and it is no argument that, because it lasted a long time without mischief, it ought now to be continued, when it is found to be pernicious. It has arisen to a height that defeats the very end of government; it must sink under its own weakness. And this, Sir, is not a case peculiar to itself, but inseparable from all human institutions. All the writers of eminence upon forms of government have said, that in order to preserve them, frequent recurrence must be had to their original principle. This is the opinion of Montesquieu, as well as of Machiavel. Gentlemen will not be inclined to dispute the authority of the latter on this point at least; and he says, that without this recurrence they grow out of shape, and deviate from their general form. It is only by recurring to former principles that any government can be kept pure and un-abused. But, say gentlemen, if any abuses have crept into our system, have we not a corrective, whose efficacy has been

proved, and of which every body approves? Have we not Mr. Grenville's bill as an amendment to the constitution? An amendment it is; an amendment which acknowledges the deficiency. It is an avowal of a defective practice. It is a strong argument for a reform, because it would not be necessary if the plan of representation were sufficient. But, Sir, there is a lumping consideration, if I may be allowed the phrase, which now more than ever ought to make every man a convert to parliamentary reform; there is an annual revenue of twenty-three millions sterling collected by the executive government from the people. Here, Sir, is the despot of election; here is the new power that has grown up to a magnitude, that bears down before it every defensive barrier established by our ancestors for the protection of the people. They had no such tyrant to control; they had no such enemy to oppose. Against every thing that was known, against every thing that was seen, they did provide; but it did not enter into the contemplation of those who established the checks and barriers of our system, that they would ever have to stand against a revenue of twenty-three millions a year. The whole landed rental of the kingdom is not estimated at more than twenty-five millions a year, and this rental is divided and dispersed over a large body, who cannot be supposed to act in concert, or to give to their power the force of combination and unity. But it is said, that though the government is in the receipt of a revenue of twenty-three millions a year, it has not the expenditure of that sum, and that its influence ought not to be calculated from what it receives, but what it has to pay away. I submit, however, to the good sense and to the personal experience of gentlemen who hear me, if it be not a manifest truth, that influence depends almost as much upon what they have to receive, as upon what they have to pay? And if this be true, of the influence which individuals derive from the rentals of their estates, and from the expenditure of that rental, how much more so is it true of government, who, both in the receipt and expenditure of this enormous revenue, are actuated by one invariable principle, that of extending or withholding favour in exact proportion to the submission or resistance to their measures which the individuals make? Compare this revenue, then, with that against which our ances-

tors were so anxious to protect us, and compare this revenue with all the bulwarks of our constitution in preceding times, and you must acknowledge, that though those bulwarks were sufficient to protect us in the days of king William and queen Anne, they are not equal to the enemy we have now to resist.

But it is said, what will this reform do for us? Will it be a talisman sufficient to retrieve all the misfortunes which we have incurred? I am free to say, that it would not be sufficient, unless it led to reforms of substantial expense, and of all the abuses that have crept into our government. But, at the same time, I think it would do this; I think it would give us the chance, as I said before, of recovery. It would give us, in the first place, a parliament vigilant and scrupulous, and that would insure to us a government active and economical. It would prepare the way for every rational improvement, of which, without disturbing the parts, our constitution is susceptible. It would do more; it would open the way for exertions infinitely more extensive than all that we have hitherto made. The right hon. gentleman says, that we have made exertions. True: but what are they in comparison to our necessity? The right hon. gentleman says, that when we consider our situation compared with that of countries which have taken another line of conduct, we ought to rejoice. I confess, Sir, that I am at a loss to conceive what country the right hon. gentleman has in view in this comparison. Does he mean to assert, that the nations who preferred the line of neutrality to that of war, have fallen into a severer calamity than ourselves? Does he mean to say, that Sweden, or that Denmark, has suffered more by observing an imprudent neutrality, than England or Austria by wisely plunging themselves into a war? Or does he mean to insinuate, that Prussia has been the victim of its impolicy, in getting out of the conflict on the first occasion? If this be the interpretation of the right hon. gentleman's argument, I do not believe that he will get many persons to subscribe to the justice of his comparison. But probably he alludes to the fate of Holland: if this be the object to which he wishes to turn our eyes, he does it unjustly. Holland acted under the despotic mandate of that right hon. gentleman; and Holland, whatever she has suffered, whatever may be her present situation, lays her calami-

ties to the charge of England. I cannot, then, admit of the argument, that our situation is comparatively better than that of the nations who altogether kept out of the war, or, being drawn into it in the first instance, corrected their error, and restored to themselves the blessings of peace.

I come now to consider the specific proposition of my hon. friend, and the arguments that have been brought against it. Let me premise, that however averse gentlemen may be to any specific proposition of reform, if they are friendly to the principle, they ought to vote for the present question, because it is merely a motion for leave to bring in a bill. An opposition to such a motion comes with a very ill grace from the right hon. gentleman, and contradicts the policy for which he strenuously argued. In 1785 he moved for leave to bring in a bill on a specific plan, and he fairly called for the support of all those who approved of the principle of reform, whatever might be the latitude of their ideas on the subject; whether they wished for more or less than his proposition, he thought that they should agree to the introduction of the bill, that it might be freely discussed in the committee, in hopes that the united wisdom of the House might shape out something that would be generally acceptable. Upon this candid argument I, for one, acted. I did not approve of his specific proposition, and yet I voted with him for leave to bring in the bill. And this, Sir, has generally happened to me on all the former occasions, when propositions have been made. Though I have constantly been a friend to the principle, I have never before seen a specific plan that had my cordial approbation. That which came nearest, and of which I the least disapproved, was the plan of an hon. gentleman who is now no more (Mr. Flood):* he was the first person who suggested the idea of extending what might be proper to add to representation, to house-keepers, as to a description of persons the best calculated to give efficacy to the representative system. My hon. friend's plan, built upon this idea, is an improvement of it, since it is not an attempt even to vary the form and outline, much less to new model the representation of the people; it keeps every thing in its place; it neither varies the number, nor changes the

* See Vol. 28, p. 452.

name, nor diverts the course of any part of our system; it corrects without change; it extends without destruction of any established right; it restores simply what has been injured by abuse, and reinstates what time has mouldered away; no man can have a right to complain of genuine property assailed; no habit even, no mode of thinking, no prejudice, will be wounded; it traces back the path of the constitution from which we have wandered, but it runs out into no new direction.

A noble lord says, that the county representation must be good, that it must be approved of; be it so: this proposes to leave the county representation where it is; I wish so to leave it. I think that representation ought to be of a compound nature. The counties may be considered as territorial representation, as contradistinguished from popular; but, in order to embrace all that I think necessary, I certainly would not approve of any farther extension of this branch of the representation. It has been asked, whether the rights of corporations ought not to be maintained? That is a matter for farther discussion. I have no hesitation in saying, that my opinion leads the other way; but if it should be thought so, it may be so modified in the bill. There is no reasonable objection to its introduction on account of our not now agreeing with all its parts. My hon. friend with all his abilities and all the industry with which he has digested his proposition, does not presume to offer it as a perfect plan. He does not call upon you to adopt all his notions, nor does he think that every part of his plan will be found to quadrate with the abstract principles of representation. He looks to what is practicable in the condition in which we are placed, not to what a new people might be tempted to hazard. My opinion, however unimportant it may be, goes with my hon. friend. I think there is enough of enterprise and vigour in the plan to restore us to health, and not enough to run us into disorder. I agree with him, because I am firmly of opinion with all the philosophical writers on the subject, that when a country is sunk into a situation of apathy and abuse, it can only be recovered by recurring to first principles.

Now, Sir, I think, that acting on this footing, to extend the right of election to house-keepers is the best and most advisable plan of reform. I think also, that it is the most perfect recurrence to first principles; I do not mean to the first

principles of society, nor the abstract principles of representation, but to the first known and recorded principles of our constitution. According to the early history of England, and the highest authorities on our parliamentary constitution, I find this to be the case. It is the opinion of the celebrated Glanville, that in all cases where no particular right intervenes, the common-law right of paying scot and lot was the right of election in the land. This Sir, was the opinion of serjeant Glanville, and one of the most celebrated committees of which our parliamentary history has to boast; and this, in my opinion, is the safest line of conduct you can adopt. But it is said, that extending the right of voting to house-keepers may, in some respects, be compared to universal suffrage, I have always deprecated universal suffrage, not so much on account of the confusion to which it would lead, as because I think that we should in reality lose the very object which we desire to obtain; because I think it would, in its nature, embarrass, and prevent the deliberative voice of the country from being heard. I do not think that you augment the deliberative body of the people by counting all the heads, but that in truth you confer on individuals, by this means, the power of drawing forth numbers, who, without deliberation, would implicitly act upon their will. My opinion is, that the best plan of representation is that which shall bring into activity the greatest number of independent voters, and that that is defective which would bring forth those whose situation and condition take from them the power of deliberation. I can have no conception of that being a good plan of election which should enable individuals to bring regiments to the poll. I hope gentlemen will not smile if I endeavour to illustrate my position by referring to the example of the other sex. In all the theories and projects of the most absurd speculation, it has never been suggested that it would be advisable to extend the elective suffrage to the female sex; and yet, justly respecting, as we must do, the mental powers, the acquirements, the discrimination, and the talents of the women of England, in the present improved state of society—knowing the opportunities which they have for acquiring knowledge—that they have interests as dear and as important as our own, it must be the genuine feeling of every gentleman who hears me, that all the superior classes of the female

sex of England must be more capable of exercising the elective suffrage with deliberation and propriety, than the uninformed individuals of the lowest class of men to whom the advocates of universal suffrage would extend it. And yet, why has it never been imagined that the right of election should be extended to women? Why! but because by the law of nations, and perhaps also by the law of nature, that sex is dependent on ours; and because, therefore, their voices would be governed by the relation in which they stand in society. Therefore it is, Sir, that with the exception of companies, in which the right of voting merely affects property, it has never been in the contemplation of the most absurd theorists to extend the elective franchise to the other sex. The desideratum to be obtained, is independent voters, and that, I say, would be a defective system that should bring regiments of soldiers, of servants, and of persons whose low condition necessarily curbed the independence of their minds. That, then, I take to be the most perfect system which shall include the greatest number of independent electors, and exclude the greatest number of those who are necessarily by their condition dependent. I think that the plan of my hon. friend draws this line as discreetly as it can be drawn, and it by no means approaches to universal suffrage. It would neither admit, except in particular instances, soldiers nor servants. Universal suffrage would extend the right to three millions of men, but there are not more than 700,000 houses that would come within the plan of my hon. friend; and when it is considered, that out of these some are the property of minors, and that some persons have two or more houses, it would fix the number of voters for Great Britain at about 600,000; and I call upon gentlemen to say, whether this would not be sufficiently extensive for deliberation on the one hand, and yet sufficiently limited for order on the other. This has no similarity with universal suffrage; and yet, taking the number of representatives as they now stand, it would give to every member about 1,500 constituents.

But it is said, would even this plan of reform protect us against the consequences of bribery and corruption? I do not affect to say that it would; I do not believe that in the present state of society we can be altogether free from this evil; no laws will be found sufficient to eradicate an evil which example has so banefully establish-

ed. We have for a course of years habituated the people to the sordid vice, and we certainly cannot wonder that a poor man should not scruple to take five guineas for his vote, when he knows that the noble lord in his neighbourhood took four or five thousand. But, it is to be hoped, that when this baneful encouragement is removed, the regulations that would be introduced would tend to diminish, if not altogether remove the evil. Among those regulations, that of shortening the duration of parliaments would be one strong corrective; and this, I think, might be done with great convenience and facility by the plan upon which the elections would be made.

It has often been a question, both within and without these walls, how far representatives ought to be bound by the instructions of their constituents. It is a question upon which my mind is not altogether made up, though I own I lean to the opinion, that having to legislate for the empire, they ought not to be altogether guided by instructions that may be dictated by local interests. I cannot however, approve of the very ungracious manner in which I sometimes hear expressions of contempt for the opinion of constituents. They are made with a very bad grace in the first session of a septennial parliament, particularly if they should come from individuals, who in the concluding session of a former parliament did not scruple to court the favour of the very same constituents, by declaring that they voted against their conscience in compliance with their desire, as was the case of an hon. alderman of the city of London. But, Sir, there is one class of constituents whose instructions it is considered as the implicit duty of members to obey. When gentlemen represent populous towns and cities, then it is a disputed point, whether they ought to obey their voice, or follow the dictates of their own conscience; but, if they represent a noble lord or a noble duke, then it becomes no longer a question of doubt; and he is not considered as a man of honour who does not implicitly obey the orders of a single constituent. He is to have no conscience, no liberty, no discretion of his own, he is sent here by my lord this, or the duke of that, and if he does not obey the instructions he receives, he is not to be considered as a man of honour and a gentleman. Such is the mode of reasoning that prevails in this House. Is this fair? Is there any re-

ciprocity in this conduct? Is a gentleman to be permitted, without dishonour, to act in opposition to the sentiments of the city of London, of the city of Westminster, or of Bristol; but if he dares to disagree with the duke, or lord, or baronet, whose representative he is, that he must be considered as unfit for the society of men of honour.

This, Sir, is the chicane and tyranny of corruption; and this at the same time, is called representation. In a very great degree the county members are held in the same sort of thralldom. A number of peers possess an overweening interest in the county, and a gentleman is no longer permitted to hold his situation than as he acts agreeably to the dictates of those powerful families. Let us see how the whole of this stream of corruption has been diverted from the side of the people to that of the crown: with what constant persevering art, every man who is possessed of influence in counties, corporations, or boroughs, that will yield to the solicitations of the court, is drawn over to that phalanx which is opposed to the small remnant of popular election. I have looked, Sir, to the machinations of the present minister in this way, and I find, that, including the number of additional titles, the right hon. gentleman has made no fewer than 115 peers in the course of his administration; that is to say, he has bestowed no fewer than 115 titles, including new creations and elevations from one rank to another. How many of these are to be ascribed to national services, and how many to parliamentary interest, I leave the House to inquire. The country is not blind to these arts of influence, and it is impossible that we can expect them to continue to endure them.

A noble lord has quoted a most able book on the subject of the French revolution, the work of my very worthy and learned friend Mr. Mackintosh, and I rejoice to see that gentlemen begin to acknowledge the merits of that eminent writer, and that the impression that it made upon me at the time, is now felt and acknowledged by those who disputed its authority. The noble lord has quoted Mr. Mackintosh's book on account of the observation which he made on the article which relates to the French elections; he thought that their plan would lead to the evil of universal suffrage. I have not forgotten the sarcasms that were flung out on my approbation of this celebrated work; that

I was told of my "new library stuffed with the jargon of the Rights of Man;" it now appears, however, that I did not greatly over-rate this performance, and that those persons now quote Mr. Mackintosh as an authority, who before treated him with splenetic scorn. My intimacy with that gentleman has not diminished, but increased my admiration of his talents; and I can now with truth affirm, that he possesses as vigorous an intellect, as any man in this or any other country. Now, Sir, with all my sincere admiration of this book, I think the weakest and most objectionable passage in it, is that which the noble lord has quoted; I think it is that which the learned author would himself be the most desirous to correct. Without descending to minute and equivocal theories, and without inquiring farther into the Rights of man than what is necessary to our purpose, there is one position in which we shall all agree—that man has the right to be well governed. Now, it is obvious, that no people can be satisfied with a government from the constituent parts of which they are excluded. When we look to the kingdom of Scotland, we see a state of representation so monstrous and absurd so ridiculous and revolting, that it is good for nothing, except, perhaps to be placed by the side of the English, in order to set off our defective system, by the comparison of one still more defective. In Scotland there is no shadow even of representation; there is neither a representation of property for the counties, nor of population for the towns. It is not what we understand in England by freeholders, who elect in the counties; the right is vested in what are called the superiorities: and it might so happen that all the members for the counties of Scotland might come here without having the vote of a single person who had a foot of property in the land. This is an extreme case, but it is within the limits of their system. In the boroughs their magistrates are self-elected and therefore the members have nothing to do with the population of the towns.

Now, Sir, having shown this to be the state of our representation. I ask what remedy there can be other than reform? What can we expect as the necessary result of a system so defective and vicious in all its parts, but increasing calamities, until we shall be driven to a convulsion, that would overthrow every thing? If we do not apply this remedy in time our fate is inevitable. Our most illustrious patriots,

the men whose memories are the dearest to Englishmen, have long ago pointed out to us parliamentary reform as the only means of redressing national grievance. I need not inform you, that sir George Savile was its most strenuous advocate; I need not tell you that the venerable and illustrious Camden was through life a steady adviser of seasonable reform; nay, Sir, to a certain degree we have the authority of Mr. Burke himself for the propriety of correcting the abuses of our system; for gentlemen will remember the memorable answer which he gave to the argument that was used for our right of taxing America, on the score of their being virtually represented, and that they were in the same situation as Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield.—“What!” said Mr. Burke, “when the people of America look up to you with the eyes of filial love and affection, will you turn to them the shameful parts of the constitution?” With the concurring testimony of so many authorities for correcting our abuses, why do we hesitate? Can we do any harm by experiment? Can we possibly put ourselves into a worse condition than we are? What advantages we shall gain, I know not. I think we shall gain many. I think we shall gain at least the chance of warding off the evil of confusion, growing out of accumulated discontent. I think we shall save ourselves from the evil that has fallen upon Ireland. I think we shall satisfy the moderate, and take even from the violent, if any such there be, the power of increasing their numbers, and of making converts to their schemes. This, Sir, is my solemn opinion, and upon this ground it is that I recommend with earnestness and solicitude the proposition of my hon. friend.

And now, Sir, before I sit down, allow me to make a single observation with respect to the character and conduct of those who have, in conjunction with myself, felt it their duty to oppose the progress of this disastrous war. I hear it said, “You do nothing but mischief when you are here; and yet we should be sorry to see you away.” I do not know how we shall be able to satisfy the gentlemen who feel towards us in this way. If we can neither do our duty without mischief, nor please them with doing nothing, I know but of one way by which we can give them content, and that is, by putting an end to our existence. With respect to myself, and I believe I can also speak

for others, I do not feel it consistent with my duty totally to secede from this House. I have no such intention; but, Sir, I have no hesitation in saying, that after seeing the conduct of this House, after seeing them give to ministers their confidence and support, upon convicted failure, imposition, and incapacity; after seeing them deaf and blind to the consequences of a career that penetrates the hearts of all other men with alarm, and that neither reason, experience, nor duty, are sufficiently powerful to influence them to oppose the conduct of government, I certainly do think that I may devote more of my time to my private pursuits, and to the retirement which I love, than I have hitherto done; I certainly think that I need not devote much of it to fruitless exertions, and to idle talk, in this House. Whenever it shall appear that my efforts may contribute in any degree to restore us to the situation from which the confidence of this House, in a desperate system and an incapable administration, has so suddenly reduced us, I shall be found ready to discharge my duty.

Sir, I have done. I have given my advice. I propose the remedy, and fatal will it be for England if pride and prejudice much longer continue to oppose it. The remedy which is proposed is simple, easy, and practicable; it does not touch the vitals of the constitution; and I sincerely believe it will restore us to peace and harmony. Do you not think that you must come to parliamentary reform soon; and is it not better to come to it now when you have the power of deliberation, than when, perhaps, it may be extorted from you by convulsion? There is as yet time to frame it with freedom and discussion; it will even yet go to the people with the grace and favour of a spontaneous act. What will it be when it is extorted from you with indignation and violence? God forbid that this should be the case! but now is the moment to prevent it; and now, I say, wisdom and policy recommend it to you, when you may enter into all the considerations to which it leads, rather than to postpone it to a time when you will have nothing to consider but the number and the force of those who demand it. It is asked, whether liberty has not gained much of late years, and whether the popular branch ought not, therefore, to be content? To this I answer, that if liberty has gained much, power has gained more. Power

has been indefatigable and unwearied in its encroachments. Every thing has run in that direction through the whole course of the present reign. This was the opinion of sir George Savile, of the marquis of Rockingham, and of all the virtuous men who, in their public life, proved themselves to be advocates for the rights of the people. They saw and deplored the tendency of the court; they saw that there was a determined spirit in the secret advisers of the crown to advance its power, and to encourage no administration that should not bend itself to that pursuit. Accordingly, through the whole reign, no administration which cherished notions of a different kind has been permitted to last, and nothing, therefore, or next to nothing, has been gained to the side of the people, but every thing to the crown in the course of the reign. During the whole of this period we have had no more than three administrations, one for twelve months, one for nine, and one for three months, that acted upon the popular principles of the early part of this century: nothing, therefore, I say has been gained to the people, while the constant current has run towards the crown; and God knows what is to be the consequence, both to the crown and country! I believe that we are come to the last moment of possible remedy. I believe that at this moment the enemies of both are few; but I firmly believe that what has been seen in Ireland will be experienced also here; and that if we are to go on in the same career with convention bills and acts of exasperation of all kinds, the few will soon become the many, and that we shall have to pay a severe retribution for our present pride. What a noble lord said some time ago of France, may be applicable to this very subject—"What!" said he, "negociate with France? With men whose hands are reeking with the blood of their sovereign? What, shall we degrade ourselves by going to Paris, and there asking in humble, diplomatic language, to be on a good understanding with them?" Gentlemen will remember these lofty words; and yet we have come to this humiliation; we have negotiated with France; and I should not be surprised to see the noble lord himself (Hawkesbury) going to Paris, not at the head of his regiment, but on a diplomatic mission to those very regicides, to pray to be upon a good understanding with

them. Shall we, then, be blind to the lessons which the events of the world exhibit to our view? Pride, obstinacy, and insult, must end in concessions, and those concessions must be humble in proportion to our unbecoming pride. Now is the moment to prevent all these degradations; the monarchy, the aristocracy, the people themselves, may now be saved; it is only necessary, at this moment, to conquer our own passions. Let those ministers, whose evil genius has brought us to our present condition, retire from the post to which they are unequal. I have no hesitation in saying, that the present administration neither can nor ought to remain in place; let them retire from his majesty's councils, and then let us, with an earnest desire of recovering the country, pursue this moderate scheme of reform, under the auspices of men who are likely to conciliate the opinion of the people. I do not speak this, Sir, from personal ambition. A new administration ought to be formed: I have no desire, no wish to make a part of any such administration; and I am sure that such an arrangement is feasible, and that it is capable of being done without me. My first and chief desire is to see this great end accomplished. I have no wish to be the person, or to be one of the persons to do it; but though my inclination is for retirement, I shall always be ready to give my free and firm support to any administration that shall restore to the country its outraged rights, and re-establish its strength upon the basis of free representation; and therefore, Sir, I shall certainly give my vote for the proposition of my hon. friend.

After sir W. Dolben had said a few words in support of the motion, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. Sheridan - - - }	91.
	{ Mr. William Smith - - }	
NOES	{ The lord Hawkesbury - }	256.
	{ Mr. Douglas - - - }	

So it passed in the negative.

List of the Minority.

Anson, Thomas	Biddulph, Robert
Aubrey, sir John, bt.	Bird, W. Wilberforce
Baker, William	Bouverie, hon. Edw.
Bamfylde, sir C.W. bt	Brogden, James
Barclay, Geo.	Burch, Jos. Randyll
Baring, John	Burdett, sir Francis, bt
Bastard, J. P.	Byng, George
Beauclerk, C. G.	Cavendish, lord G. A.

Coke, Thomas W.	Northey, Wm.
Coke, Edward	Philips, J. G.
Clarke, Edward	Pierse, Henry
Colquhoun, Wm.	Plumer, W.
Combe, H. Christian	Pollen, G. A.
Copley, sir Lionel, bt.	Rawdon, hon. J.
Courtenay, John	Rawdon, hon. George
Crewe, John	Richardson, Joseph
Curwen, J. Christian	Robson, R. B.
Davers, sir Charles, bt	Russell, lord John
Denison, W. J.	Russell, lord Wm.
Dimsdale, baron	St. John, hon. St. A.
Dolben, sir W., bart.	Shum, George
Dundas, Charles	Spencer, lord Robert
Dundas, hon. L.	Stanley, lord
Erskine, hon. T.	Stein, John
Fitzpatrick, general	Sturt, Charles
Fletcher, sir Henry, bt	Taylor, M. A.
Folkes, sir M. B. bart.	Thornton, Henry
Fox, right hon. C. J.	Tierney, George
Greene, James	Townshend, lord John
Grey, Charles	Trevanion, John
Hare, James	Tufton, hon. John
Harrison, John.	Tufton, hon. Henry
Heathcote, sir G., bt.	Turner, sir Charles, bt.
Hill, sir Richard, bt.	Vansittart, George
Hobhouse, Benjamin	Vyner, Robert, jun.
Howard, Henry	Walpole, hon. George
Hussey, Wm.	Walwyn, James
Jefferys, Nathaniel	Western, C. C.
Jekyll, Joseph	Whitbread, Samuel
Jervoise, J. C.	Wigley, Edmund
Knight, R. P.	Wilkins, Walter
Lemon, sir Wm. bart.	Williams, sir T., bt.
Lemon, John	Williams, Owen
Milbank, Ralph	Wilson, Richard
Milner, sir W., bart.	TELLERS.
Nicholls, John.	Sheridan, R. B.
North, Dudley,	Smith, W.

Debate in the Lords on the Duke of Bedford's Motion for the Dismission of his Majesty's Ministers.] May 30. The Duke of Bedford rose, and spoke as follows:—After the fate which has attended the different motions which the state of public affairs has induced me to bring forward, it may, perhaps, appear surprising that I should again obtrude myself upon your lordships. Disappointed, however, as I have been upon former occasions, the circumstances in which the country is placed, call for every exertion for its salvation, which presents the slightest hopes of success. I therefore feel myself compelled once more to call upon your lordships to take into your consideration the causes and the consequences of that situation. No man will deny the unexampled extent of our calamities. In tracing the picture of our situation for the last four years, the period to which I intend to limit my observations, there can be little new to which to call your lord-

ships attention. It is a beaten track, which presents little variety to the view, except some new calamity, and some fresh misfortune. But we ought not to be deterred by this disagreeable prospect. It is our duty to exert ourselves to remove the causes of those calamities which we suffer, and to avert those dangers which we apprehend. The war is the first point to which I shall call the attention of your lordships, as the great source of our present calamities. It has been said, that this was a war undertaken for the preservation of law, religion, and morality—a war in defence of our liberty, our constitution, our property. What is the state of property now? Has it been meliorated. What are the benefits which we have derived from the war? If you wished to destroy the republican government, consider the situation in which it now stands, and the circumstances in which you are placed. If you went to war upon that principle, why do you not persevere upon the same ground? Or have ministers abandoned the cause for which they originally contended, because they find that it cannot be attained? While you embarked in a contest to defend your laws against a foreign enemy, perhaps it would have been as well to have secured them against an administration at home. Are your laws ameliorated by the war? On the contrary, have not your dearest privileges been suspended? Have not laws been made against that very liberty which you went to war to defend? It has been said that we went to war for the preservation of religion. Did you expect to defend the altar by surrounding it with seas of blood, or to secure it from violation, by piling round it the carcasses of the dead? We have been told that we were fighting in support of morality. Has this war, then, produced many examples favourable to morality? Has the conduct of the king of Prussia furnished examples of morality? Do you find it in the dungeons of Olmutz, or in the conduct of those petty tyrants who buzzed about you when there were any hopes of success and disappeared when your cause was desperate?—If we look at the attempts which have been made to negotiate, we shall be able to judge of the hopes of peace under the auspices of those who are entrusted with the administration of public affairs. Can any one think, that the best mode of negotiation has been tried, or that the means most likely to

ensure success have been employed? That the means employed were not the best, I have always thought; and in this opinion I have been confirmed by the acknowledgment even of those who supported the war, and who, in other respects, approved the measures of ministers. I hold it clear from the documents produced, that ministers were willing to make peace, provided Belgium was given up to the Emperor, or placed in such a situation as to be independent of France; and that France was willing to conclude a peace if we had agreed to cede Belgium. When I reflect upon the conduct of ministers on this occasion, knowing as they must have done the critical situation of the country, and the state of our resources, I cannot feel much confidence in the success of any attempts at negotiation which they may make. They were apprized of the danger which threatened public credit; they were able to judge how far it was wise to insist upon terms when they compared them with the means by which they could be enforced. It cannot be denied, that the restoration of Belgium was peremptorily insisted upon. The friends of ministers, indeed, contend, that this was but the opening of negotiation, that the French flew off, and that no opportunity was given to remove obstacles. Upon this subject I must refer to the facts which the letter of lord Malmesbury contains. The English minister gave in a memorial, proposing the general restoration to the Emperor of all the acquisitions which the French had made at his expense. Upon this proposition a conversation ensued between lord Malmesbury and M. Delacroix. Lord Malmesbury opened the subject in a manner which did him the highest credit. He told the French minister, that the magnitude of the subject ought to exclude finesse; that they ought to speak out with freedom and truth. He seems to say, that the restoration of Belgium to the Emperor would be insisted upon, but desires a *contre projet*; adding, however, at the same time, that no expectation should be admitted that Belgium would be retained. Its ceasing to belong to the French was admitted to be a *sine quâ non*. No man, then, can contend, unless lord Malmesbury had acted in opposition to his instructions, but that the ministers of this country had determined that Belgium should not remain a part of the French republic. I

would ask the House, then, seriously to consider the time and the circumstances in which the point was so obstinately maintained. After what they must have known of the internal situation of this country, after they were apprized of the danger with which the Bank was menaced, was it wise to put Belgium in competition with the public credit of this country? I would ask, whether those shortsighted ministers, who risked the main spring of our prosperity, and the destruction of that grand source from which flows all our wealth and all our greatness, by insisting upon a demand which they had no prospect of ever being able to enforce, can justify the confidence of the House, or inspire hopes of success from their future exertions? The next point is the state of our finances. I am not prepared to show the exact amount of the debt incurred by the war; I am afraid, however, that the payment of the interest is but scantily provided for: the annual amount of the new taxes is $7\frac{1}{2}$ millions: but I believe a very considerable additional sum will be requisite to cover the whole expense that has been incurred. Should the war continue three months longer, or for the whole of the year, three millions more must be raised to defray the interest of the debt which this war has created. It appears from the report of the committee appointed to examine into the subject in 1790, or 1791, that for the average of the five years preceding, the peace establishment was 16,850,000*l.* including the annual million for the reduction of the national debt. Different circumstances will make an addition to that peace establishment of 500,000*l.*; so that the whole of the expenses already incurred, the sum which will be found outstanding on the winding up of the accounts, which I compute at 15,000,000*l.* the whole of the new peace establishment, with the additional 200,000*l.* annually voted for the reduction of the national debt, will now require an annual peace establishment amounting to 26,300,000*l.* The permanent taxes previous to the war werestated at 13,890,000*l.* Taking the taxes imposed since 1793 for what they have been given, and stating the land tax at its usual amount, there remains upon the whole a deficiency of 3,000,000*l.* Enormous as the burthens already imposed upon the country are, we have to lament the additional burthens they must yet undergo. Ten millions and

a half are required to cover the interest of the debt which the present war has created. No one year have the people yet borne the burthen of more than three millions, so that the dreadful weight of 72 millions annual burthen which they have not yet experienced, must be added to the pressure under which they already groan. It is a principle of the constitution of this country, that the people should, as early as possible, be apprized of the burthens which they must support. The present minister, in pursuance of this principle, used to boast as a particular merit, that he faced the difficulties we had to encounter, and never concealed the burthens which we had incurred; but how as he observed that principle which he boasted as the rule of his conduct? Upon this point I refer to the documents contained in the reports of the committees before the House. From the beginning of 1795, the Bank directors were frequent and earnest in their remonstrances to the chancellor of the exchequer; they reminded him of the advances which they had made to government, and his promises of payment. These representations were uniformly answered with promises, that the advances should be repaid. These promises were never performed, and new applications for fresh advances were made. The remonstrances of the Bank were despised, and the amount of their advances continued to increase. If the whole of the correspondence between the chancellor of the exchequer and the Bank, to the moment when it was compelled to stop payment, does not excite the indignation of the House, nothing which I can add can have any effect. It has ever been held as the best means of preserving and extending the public prosperity, to face our difficulties and to meet all our expenses; here, however, the object of the minister was, by a chain of perfidy and deceit, to disguise the amount of our expense, and to conceal the real burthens of the people. Money was applied to purposes different from those for which it was granted; provision was never made for the scale of expense which was employed, the Bank of England was forced to stop payment; and public credit was exposed to utter ruin, to supply an expenditure which parliament had not sanctioned, and to support the mischievous schemes of ministers. Had the real object of the war been fairly avowed, or the expense of it fairly

stated, peace would, long ere now, have been concluded.—I come now to consider the internal state of the country. The laws which have been passed on pretence of preserving internal tranquillity will afford an additional proof of the pernicious system on which ministers have acted; laws which I hold to be disgraceful to a free government, repugnant to the constitution, and inconsistent with the principles of the Revolution—

Lord *Sydney* called to order, and said, that such language ought not to be applied to laws which stood upon the Statute book.

The Duke of *Bedford* continued. The whole system of the present administration has been incompatible with good government. Let us look to Ireland. When I speak of that country, I know not in what terms of reprobation to express my abhorrence of the system which ministers have pursued. Earl Fitzwilliam is sent out as lord lieutenant, as was understood, upon the salutary plan of making those concessions which would satisfy the expectations of the people of Ireland; he was deceived by ministers and sacrificed to their old system. On a former occasion, when I stated that earl Fitzwilliam was best calculated for securing the happiness of that country, I was accused of throwing a reproach upon lord Camden. From the reports I have heard of that noble lord, with whom I am not personally acquainted, I am led to entertain as high an opinion of his private worth as I feel upon the experience of private friendship for the virtue and worth of his predecessor. But earl Fitzwilliam went out to carry into execution a system dear to the wishes of Irishmen. Lord Camden went out to direct a system far different, and avowedly hostile to those measures which the people of Ireland were led to expect, and on which their hearts were fixed. What has been the consequence of that system which ministers chose to employ? Every attempt to coerce has only spread more widely the spirit of discontent; their blind perseverance in coercion has heightened discontent into disaffection, and endangered the connexion of the two countries. Such are the effects which were predicted from the system which ministers chose to put in practice at a time when the utmost tranquillity was said to prevail. At home we have deeply to regret the events which have taken place under the conduct of ministers.

Circumstances have occurred which never happened before. The first appearances of these events I do not mean to impute to ministers.—I allude to the disturbances which have lately taken place in the navy. I am aware that the subject is a delicate one, but its importance forces itself on our attention. Although we have no authentic documents upon this subject, the papers which have been circulated, contain facts of which there can be no doubt. When the mutiny first broke out, the sailors made demands, many of which, in the opinion of every one, were reasonable; others not. So far it is known that certain requests were made; to these the Admiralty made offers, which were rejected. The Admiralty then raised their offers, and the agreement was concluded. What was given, however, is thought to be reasonable, but the conduct of ministers in offering less than they afterwards granted shows that they thought this more than was reasonable. Are you then, after the examples of incapacity, which they have manifested, and the evils their measures have produced, determined to devote your country to destruction, by leaving its affairs to the conduct of men who have involved you in such complicated calamities?—I trust I have said enough to show that to the conduct of ministers we owe a great part of the calamities under which the country now suffers. I am desirous, however, to mark distinctly the grounds on which the motion proceeds. It is not merely the situation of the country, but it is the system by which the country has been governed which the motion aims to remedy: without a new line of conduct, without a new system of government, we cannot hope that things will continue upon their present footing. Various considerations present themselves upon this subject, and many changes are felt to be necessary. The most salutary of these is a change in the representation of the people. But even these changes must be nugatory without others more important. Without retrenchment and economy in every department, without correcting the abuses which prevail, and fairly looking at our situation, we cannot expect that co-operation of the country which is necessary to give effect to the vigorous measures required to extricate us from our present state of difficulty and danger.—There is only one point remaining. For four years I have endeavoured to impress the House

with the opinion which I feel of the public measures which have been pursued, and to rouse your lordships to a sense of the evils which it threatened to produce. In the course of these exertions, I have been subjected to the foulest misrepresentation. Such treatment has never deterred me from performing my duty. I have been told that to my indiscretion was owing the disturbance which lately broke out in the fleet. Had such an event actually been owing to any conduct of mine, I should have hid my head from the world, and buried myself and my name in oblivion. When such a charge was brought forward, I expected that some proof of it would have been attempted. Yet none of these insinuations have deterred me from doing my duty. I feel it to be the duty of every man to exert himself for the advantage of his country, if his efforts can be attended with the slightest hope of success. For four years, however, I have struggled to oppose a system which I conceive to be pregnant with so much disaster. Yet, after all the arguments I could employ, and all the illustrations which experience has afforded, I have not gained a single inch for the country. In these circumstances there is nothing left but to retire. In thus retiring I hope I shall not be accused of inconsistency, if, in the course of a week or a month, I should again return. Whenever I can indulge the hope of being useful, I shall return. In acting in this manner I may be accused of folly, but at least, I shall escape the charge of inconsistency. What I have now to propose I do not bring forward with any hope of its being carried. All I ask is, that your lordships will turn it in your minds—that you will reflect seriously upon the situation of the country—that you will try to devise some means of avoiding the complete ruin with which we are threatened. By the system that has hitherto been pursued I cannot hope that the impending destruction can be averted. Some other line of conduct must be adopted. What that new system shall be I am not so presumptuous as to decide: all I desire is, that you will put an end to that from which we have already suffered so much calamity, and from which we have yet so much to dread. I therefore move:

“That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to remind his majesty that his dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lords spiritual and temporal in parlia-

ment assembled, have, during this calamitous war, uniformly given every aid and assistance that could contribute to that support which his majesty has experienced from a brave and a loyal people:

"To assure his majesty, that it is even now with deep regret we approach his throne, to lay before him the grievances under which his people labour; but that a sense of duty compels us to state to his majesty, that the desertion of all our allies, the triumphs of an enemy we were taught by his servants to despise, the public credit of the country impaired, the coasts of these kingdoms with impunity insulted, the exertions of the British navy suspended, and the melancholy situation into which Ireland has been industriously brought presents to our view a series of calamity unparalleled in the history of our country:

"Humbly to state to his majesty, that we cannot attribute this uniform succession of misfortune to accident or even to the miserable incapacity of his servants; that we must regard it as the effect of a system of government, destructive of the exertions and hostile to the constitution of our country:

"That we feel it our bounden duty, humbly to represent to his majesty, that much as we lament the blood that has been spilt, and the burthens that have been imposed on his majesty's subjects in maintaining the disastrous contest in which we are engaged, deeply as we deplore the perilous state of his majesty's kingdoms, we can alone regard these our present misfortunes as a prelude to more serious calamities, which we view with horror, but which we look forward to as the sure consequence of persevering in that system of policy which his majesty's servants have pursued:

"That under these circumstances we beseech his majesty, by dismissing those ministers from his presence who have constantly insulted the enemy by their discourse, and encouraged them by their incapacity, to give to his subjects a proof of his anxiety to procure that peace which his people so anxiously desire.

"We entreat his majesty, by dismissing from his councils those men whose extravagance and want of good faith have impaired the credit of the country to display his desire of uniting with his subjects in restoring that public credit on which the importance of his kingdom so maturely depends.

"We earnestly solicit his majesty, by dismissing his present servants, to give to the people of Ireland the strongest proof they can receive of his majesty's disapprobation of that system of treachery by which the present discontents of that country have been fostered, and of his majesty's intention of securing (if it is yet possible) the connexion that subsists between these kingdoms, by extending to men of all descriptions in that oppressed country, the blessings of the constitution under which they were born.

"Finally, we implore his majesty, that by dismissing from his presence for ever, those ministers whose measures have impaired the liberties, and whose extravagance has injured the property of his subjects, he will afford a sure testimony of his gracious intention of co-operating in restoring the spirit of the British constitution, and of adopting such a system of economy and retrenchment as is alone consistent with the prosperity of his exhausted people."

The Duke of *Athol* did not think that the measure proposed in the address was at all calculated to meet the exigency of the times. The war, he acknowledged, had been the great source of the difficulties under which the country laboured. These, however, were inseparable from such a contest as the present. It was, in his opinion, necessary for the preservation of order, religion and law; and when these objects, which we had gained, were compared with what we had lost, we had no reason to complain. With respect to the cession of Belgium, we were not in the same situation now that we were in during lord Malmesbury's negotiation: he did not conceive it therefore to be fair to reason from the terms which it was then proper to reject, to the terms which we ought at present to accept. In reply to the question of the noble duke, "What had we gained by the contest?"—we had gained the privilege of sitting and debating in that House; for if we had not entered into the war with France, neither he nor the noble duke would have been peers of the realm. Of the Sedition and Treason acts, he had approved, as measures dictated by a temporary and urgent necessity. He opposed the address, upon the ground that it would tend to detract from the energy of government, to unhinge the administration, and even to unhinge the country.

The Duke of *Grafton* begged leave to

address a few serious words to the House, which he hoped would prove salutary to the country. He spoke under an impression, that if some measure of importance was not immediately adopted for its salvation, a gulph was prepared to swallow it. He did not wish to unhinge the government, as the noble earl had dreaded would be the effect of the motion moved, but he should give the address his hearty support upon the principle that a continuation in error would beget a repetition of disaster. He desired any man to quote an instance in the history of the world in which a nation once flourishing had been reduced to a situation more calamitous. Four years ago the British empire had attained to a state of undisputed pre-eminence in Europe, and its prosperity was the object of envy to every surrounding nation; but now it was reduced to the lowest ebb of public distress. Our wealth, which was thought exhaustless, had been wasted by idle prodigality; and our resources, which were considered almost as unlimited, had fallen a victim to a system of most lavish profusion. He called upon their lordships to recollect the extent of our commerce, the magnitude of our capital, the skill of our manufacturers, and above all the general industry of the people. He reminded them of the respectability of our military establishment; a militia composed of the best troops, and commanded by officers of the largest property; a standing army under the command of experienced officers, and composed of soldiers not inferior in bravery or discipline to any in Europe; add to this, a navy acknowledged to be superior in force to the united fleets of every kingdom in the world. He thought it unnecessary to dilate upon this once glorious but now mortifying topic. Their lordships would find the prosperity of the country at that period beautifully depicted in a speech delivered by Mr. Pitt in 1792. How he had come to depart from those principles, by acting upon which he had brought the country to that high state of greatness, it was for him to account to his conscience and to the public. He trusted that the change had not been dictated by a lust of power, if so, he had exceeded the criminality described in the maxim "*video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.*" But from whatever cause it arose, the contrast in our situation was most deplorable. We stood stript of every ally; Austria, which had been more

faithful than the rest, from all the information he could collect, he understood to be now just not an enemy. The Bank of England, owing to a most unaccountable inattention on the part of the Treasury to the circulating specie of the country, had stopped payment, and had thereby received a blot on its character, which all the waters of Lethe could never efface. The first lord of the Treasury, as if intent upon its ruin, had persisted in draining it of its cash in spite of the representations of those who were best acquainted with its circumstances, and heedless of the warning which he had received from the stoppage of the Newcastle and other country banks. The indelible blot which it had sustained was from the hand of government being stretched out against it in defiance of the opinion which formerly existed, that it was above the government. Other ministers would have shifted the odium of restraining the specie upon parliament; and the hand of government would never have appeared in the transaction; and then the Bank would have risen paramount to its distresses: but the present minister, by adopting a different plan, had ruined its good faith for ever. If a specimen of the inability of ministers to conduct the war were asked for, the expedition to St. Domingo alone would prove it. The madness of that measure was beyond belief. His grace next adverted, in terms of severe reprehension, to the expedition against St. Domingo, in which an immense treasure had been expended, and the flower of the British army had fallen victims to a pestilential climate and dire disease. To the defence of the country ministers had been as inattentive as they were wild and misguided in their foreign operations. He dared not tell how few regular infantry there were at this moment in the kingdom; he merely mentioned the circumstance as a warning to the noble lord opposite, how he exposed the country unprotected to the attacks of its enemies. He censured the conduct of ministers for not increasing the pay of the sailors, when the last additional allowance was granted to the soldiers. If he was asked, why he did not mention the expediency of the measure in parliament at the time? his answer was short: had he thrown out the hint, all the thanks he would have received would have been an accusation that he was an encourager of mutiny and insurrection. He was at a

loss, however, to conceive any reason for the delay which took place between the promise which was made to the seamen by the lords of the Admiralty, and the delay of the execution of their engagement. Upon this ground, he had a heavy charge to bring against ministers, confident as he was, that had the execution of the engagement immediately succeeded the promise, there would not have been a second mutiny on board the fleet.—The next point to which he came, was one of a very distressing nature, namely, the situation of Ireland. Upon this subject he had but one opinion, which was, that if there was not a complete emancipation of the Catholics, a redress of the grievances of the Protestants, a parliamentary reform, and a total change of men, that country would either be involved in civil war, or undergo a revolution, and thus another republic be added to the list of those which the wise conduct of ministers had already established in all parts of Europe. And if a revolution was to take place in Ireland, no man could doubt, but that it would soon be followed by an event of a similar nature in this country. This was as clear to him as the relation between any effect and its cause. He thought that a parliamentary reform might prevent much mischief, and an eminent statesman (Mr. Fox), in his inimitable argument in favour of the measure, might have added, in support of it, the name of lord Bacon, to those of Montesquieu and Machiavel.—Having said thus much upon the state of the country, he put it to their lordships, by what means it had been reduced to that situation? Was it not by the conduct of ministers? And would they trust to those men to extricate them from their difficulties, who had brought them into the dilemma? Did they think, that having descended so low, they had virtue enough to ascend that steep and rugged path which led to restoration and prosperity? He entertained no such opinion. As well might he think, that the beautiful earth which they inhabited, and through which the most perfect symmetry prevailed, was formed according to the system of the Epicureans, by an infinity of atoms. Ministers had shown their total inability to manage the concerns of a great empire. The confidence which parliament had placed in them had been betrayed; and for parliament to continue that confidence in spite of experience, would be to betray the trust vested in it by the country.

If the address which had been moved by the noble duke was rejected, he should have the satisfaction of having done his duty in opposing it. Finding, however, all his efforts to be unavailing, he should not trouble them any longer with his attendance in that House, but should retire to fortify his own mind against approaching dangers, and to inculcate in the minds of a large family, patience and resignation to the lot which might befall them. He reminded their lordships, that it was the most beautiful part of wisdom to acknowledge error, and recommended it to them to meet him upon that ground. He assured them, that he felt much greater comfort than all the wealth this world could confer, in the consciousness of having done his duty, in endeavouring to prevent the evil which he foresaw would tend to shake the throne and to subvert the constitution. He should consider himself as bound to lay before his sovereign the reasons for his conduct, in that closet where, he was free to declare, never one word had dropped from his lips which did not come from his heart.

The Earl of *Romney* asserted, that the war had always been both just and necessary; that so far from its being an unsuccessful or disastrous war, it had been exactly the reverse; and that the valour of Englishmen had never been more conspicuously displayed than in the course of it. He was convinced that the language of despondency, which had been so often resorted to in that House, had been of the greatest detriment to the cause of this country. Looking upon the war in the light he did, he could not think of voting for the Address. One passage of it alluded to the “oppressed people of Ireland.” These words he thought very wrong. What would be said by the people of Ireland, if this address was voted, and it thereby got abroad, that this House thought the people of Ireland an oppressed people? This was not the time for removing ministers. If the country was wounded in its vitals, as represented, it did not signify whether it fell under this or another administration. He was of opinion, that the mutiny was owing to French gold, and that it would one day be proved to be so. If the sailors were not true to their country, our situation was desperate indeed; but if they were, then we might defy the combined attack of every nation upon earth.

The Earl of *Guilford* said, that we had

to contend against a formidable enemy, with powers cemented by resistance, and in possession of numerous armies, without one spot against which to turn them, except his majesty's dominions. With regard to our internal situation, the failure of the Bank, which at one time would have been regarded as the greatest of misfortunes the country could suffer, was now the least evil it had to encounter. To the misconduct of ministers he ascribed the aggregate sum of that calamity. They were now called upon to take some step which might afford a chance of salvation. He beseeched them to prove, that they were not dead to the feelings of the people, or blind to the situation of the state. The noble duke had proposed to carry an address to his majesty, as a preliminary step to any measure by which the salvation of the country could be effected; and in this address he most heartily concurred. The first effect which was likely to flow from it was, immediate peace, without which there was no chance of salvation. But, under the present administration, was any man so sanguine as to hope that peace could be obtained? Besides, peace would be productive of the most beneficial consequences upon the kingdom at large. Their lordships were not unacquainted with the critical situation of Ireland. The great body of those who had been a few years ago friends to parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation, were now united with the few, who at that time wished a separation from this country; and a great party, under the name of united Irishmen, were at this moment ready to join any standard under which they could find relief and protection. The dismissal of ministers would be followed by concessions to the disaffected in that kingdom, which, operating in conjunction with the restoration of peace, would allay discontent and remove the dread of a separation. The system of ministers was calculated to produce that unfortunate event, and the delay of peace went in aid of the other measures which they were pursuing. He next considered the effect of the address upon this country. He did not think that the opinions, for the suppression of which we had gone to war, had lost any ground in the course of the last five years. Did they not see, that revolutionary opinions were gaining upon them every hour? Some great change, he ventured to predict, was near at hand. That change, whenever it should

happen, he trusted would tend to the advantage of the country. He was not so unreasonable as to suppose, that a war of such unexampled magnitude could be conducted without a vast expense; but he thought that parliament should exercise some control over that expense. He wished to pass no heavier a censure upon the chancellor of the exchequer, than the chancellor of the exchequer had passed upon those ministers who had gone before him. How far that censure extended, their lordships would see by recurring to the report of the finance committee in 1782. They would there find, that Mr. Pitt had made grievous complaints against all the systems of finance which had ever been acted upon, and to which he himself afterwards recurred. They would there find, that extraordinaries were called little less than money raised without the consent, and expended without the knowledge, of parliament. They would find, in that report, the conduct of the former administration condemned upon examination, and the conduct of the present condemned in anticipation. To all the other effects, therefore, which the measure proposed by the noble duke would produce, would be added a correction of the extravagance in blood and treasure, for which the present, beyond all former administrations, had been distinguished.—With respect to the expediency of a reform in the representation, he had long differed upon this subject with gentlemen, for whose opinions he had a great respect; and though many of his doubts were removed, and he had by no means the same terror of the plan as some others, he confessed he was not a convert to the measure. He considered it as a remedy, weak and ineffectual for the complicated evils of which they had to complain, and therefore he could not recommend it as a cure for the diseased state of the commonwealth. He beseeched their lordships to weigh well how they voted on this evening. He beseeched them, if they dissented from the address, not to be contented with merely negating it. If they approved of the system upon which ministers had been acting, he beseeched them publicly to announce it, and to say something in their favour. Their cause, he assured them, needed support. He entreated them to declare, if they thought so, that their conduct had been able, upright, and economical; that their alliances had been well chosen; and that the chan-

cellor of the exchequer had been right in promising to pay the advances from the Bank to government, and in breaking his engagement as often as it was made. If they treated this motion with silent contempt, or got rid of it by a simple negative, he should feel it ridiculous to propose any other measure, or to trespass upon their patience with a repetition of the same proposal, until he had some better prospect of success.

Lord *Auckland* said, that his object in rising at present was, to combat the impressions which the speeches of the two noble dukes and of the noble earl were calculated to give to these kingdoms and to all Europe. They had represented their country as brought down "to the lowest ebb of national distress, by a scandalous waste and lavish profusion;" they had described her prospects as "cheerless abroad and cheerless at home." The noble duke who opened the debate had not confined himself to general statements, but had thought proper to argue, that if the war should close even in the course of the present year, there would be a necessity for bringing forward additional taxes to the amount of three millions annually. As, however, the noble duke had repeatedly expressed his anxiety to ascertain the real state of the country, he surely would be glad to revise the positions which he had tried to establish, and in which he would find great and evident inaccuracies. According to the report of the committee of 1792, the peace expenditure, previous to the present war, including the annual million to the Sinking fund, was estimated at 16,500,000*l.* The noble duke allowed that the produce of the permanent taxes which existed previous to the war, might be stated at 13,800,000*l.*, and the land and malt, at 2,750,000*l.* Here, therefore, we have a revenue of 16,550,000*l.* to make good the old peace expenditure of 16,500,000*l.* With regard to the produce of taxes improved during the war, it appeared by the reports of the finance committee now sitting, that such of these taxes as are in full receipt, have produced the whole amount for which they were given. It became, therefore, a fair inference, that in the total of those taxes, after the first year or two, there would not be any material deficiency. The noble duke, however, had urged, that after the war, there must be an additional peace establishment; perhaps it might be so; though it was impossible, at present, to

foresee what may be the situation and interests of this empire on the return of peace. But on the other hand, the noble duke had made no allowance for the annual East India payment, for the annual produce of the lottery, and for the probable rise of other branches of revenue, when relieved from the pressure of war. Thus far, then, it was reasonable to set off one consideration against the other, and to presume that the result of increased income would be adequate to the increased demand. Consequently, in the case supposed by the noble duke, the amount of new taxes was reduced to the amount of interest to be provided for the sum necessary to clear arrears at the close of the war. The noble duke had stated that sum at fifteen millions, and the taxes for the interest (including one per cent for the Sinking fund) at 1,250,000*l.* a year. That estimate, however, was at the rate of from eight to nine per cent; whereas in the assumed case of such a loan to be made in a period of peace, six per cent or 900,000*l.* a year, would have been an ample allowance. And thus the noble duke's three millions a year might reasonably be reduced upon his own data one third of that sum. But to what possible use or purpose were such statements brought forwards in the present conjuncture? It had been well observed by the noble earl (*Guilford*) that "great and perilous wars must be attended with great and heavy expenses." It was an easy task, in a moment of accumulated calamities naturally agitating the public mind, to make declamatory invectives against the folly and incapacity of ministers, and to impute blame where blame is not justly imputable. It would be a task still more easy, but suited only to weak or malignant minds, under the impression of such calamities to depreciate the national resources; to weaken the national energy (our best resource and possession), and to hold us out to ourselves and to our enemy, as necessarily sinking under the difficulties to which we are exposed. He was sorry to add, that such representations had tended to shake the public confidence, the public courage, and the public credit. They had done more; co-operating, as they had done, with the revolutionary opinions, which the noble earl says, are gaining ground from hour to hour, they had given pretexts and power to that principle of insubordination, to that spirit of anarchy, to that peril, to that

calamity, which all parties concurred in deploring, and which he considered as the real and essential evil in our present situation. And thus it was, that a brave and enlightened nation, enjoying an unexampled prosperity, and the power and the means to maintain that prosperity, was abandoning itself to destruction.—He had taken occasion, in a former debate to advert to the strange and disgraceful paradox which we are exhibiting to our contemporaries and to future history. We talk of the war as if it had brought upon us a continued series of losses and defeats; and yet there never has been a war in which we have obtained such glory or success. We have destroyed the commerce of our enemies; we have greatly reduced their naval force; we have wrested from them many of their colonies and valuable possessions. Again, we lament over our finances and resources, as if the country were sunk into an extreme of poverty and of helplessness. And yet it has recently appeared, that we have the means of raising within the space of a few months, two loans of eighteen millions each; and the payments are making upon them without intermission or difficulty; at the same time the general revenue is undiminished; and our commerce is in the astonishing predicament of being at least a third higher than in the most prosperous period before the war. Lastly, we talk of danger from invasion at a moment when our fleets have the command of the sea, when they are actually blockading the ports of our enemies, and when our means of interior defence are greater than they were ever known to be. He felt that in this part of his subject the minds of their lordships must naturally turn once more to the unhappy consideration to which he had before adverted; certainly, it was a matter of great and just alarm. It was a cancerous disorder upon the empire. He did not believe, however, that the disease yet affected any vital part. He trusted that the bulk and body of the sailors, who had so long been considered as the darling children of their country, as the pride, and glory, and safeguard of the kingdom, would in the event be found untainted. He could not agree with the noble baron, that French gold was at the bottom of the business. French gold and French principles might have actuated some individuals; but the others had fallen into temporary excesses, and he was confident

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that the navy would be brought back to a right sense of its duties. If, unhappily, he should prove mistaken in that opinion, all other subjects of contest in that House, would be matters indifferent and unimportant. He had occasionally been attacked, both in speeches and in pamphlets, for having endeavoured in the late, and in the present war, to give to his country an encouraging idea of her means and resources: it was true, that he had laboured, and would continue to labour, to give to her a just confidence in those means and resources. Not, however, from any disposition to prolong the war: he had always seen the great dangers and difficulties of the present war; but he had seen also, that the struggle was unavoidable. The noble mover had talked of individual interests in the present crisis: the noble duke's interests were not superior to his in the safety and peace of the empire. He had interests nearer and dearer to the mind than those of wealth and of property. It was the just sense of those interests, which redoubled his anxiety to promote a general confidence in the national character and national force. In the recent instance of the constrained defection of our honourable but unfortunate ally, it was a great consolation to us, that we had maintained to the last in that alliance, as in every other, the same generous friendship, the same unshaken good faith. The defection had left us in every sense insulated. Still, however, if we were true to ourselves, we possessed the means of attaining an honourable and solid peace. If, on the other hand, we should, with an unmanly impatience, hurry the war to a termination of a different description, the century will close in scenes of desolation through these kingdoms, infinitely more terrible than any that have yet appeared in the calamitous annals of the French revolution.

The Earl of *Suffolk* expressed his surprise at the silence of ministers, when matters of so much moment had been brought forward. He rose to put one question to them, and that was, whether the system of coercion that had been fatally adopted in Ireland, was meant to be persevered in? If ministers obstinately persisted in their silence, he should communicate to the House the private information which he had received on the subject [A pause ensued, and no peer rising,] He said, he should hold it his duty to read a part of a letter from an officer on the pub-

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lic service in the sister kingdom, a man of acknowledged ability, worth, and talents, brigadier general Cooke. The letter gave a very gloomy account of the state of Ireland, and after stating that there were agents from the French Directory actively employed in promoting the cause of insurrection, and that if the sword was once drawn all was over, it declared that the country was in a state of defence, little better than it was before Christmas, and specified the exact number of troops under the writer's command for the defence of the north.

The Earl of *Westmorland* called the noble lord to order, and expressed his strong sense of the impropriety of giving the opinion of a military officer upon the defensive state of Ireland.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* expressed his surprise that ministers would not give the public any satisfaction upon subjects so interesting, and that they even carried their disposition to secrecy so far as to put a negative upon information, when it was offered from another quarter. He had come down on that day, prepossessed with an idea, that some notice would be given by ministers, that a negotiation had commenced between this country and France, or at least that overtures for a negotiation had been made by his majesty's ministers. He confessed he had no other ground for the supposition, than general report, which to a willing mind was often apt to go for more than it was worth. What could retard propositions for negotiation, he was utterly at a loss to divine: the original causes of the war no longer existed; we had no longer the opening of the Scheldt to resist; the territory of Savoy no longer formed a topic for deliberation; the fate of the Low Countries, he was afraid, was already decided. Deserted by all our allies, we had only our own interest to care for; the only cause of the delay, therefore, was, to him, inexplicable. Ministers surely could not be absurd enough to be waiting for the mediation of some northern power, who knew nothing about the settlements which were to be the subject of discussion between this country and France; besides, in nine cases out of ten, these mediations tended rather to retard than accelerate the object to which they were directed. Allies, we now had none. He trusted that ministers had not the madness to attempt to make Austria renew the contest. He reminded

their lordships of the bad faith of the allies with whom he had acted before, notwithstanding the firm persuasion expressed by ministers of their undoubted honour and sincerity. When he had talked of a subsidy being sent to the king of Prussia, ministers exclaimed, "subsidy! do you call it a subsidy? It is a cheap economical, contract." They had had plenty of contracts of this nature. Austria our faithful ally had also deserted us. It might be said "it is an ill wind that blows nobody good," and that as we have hitherto been sending money out of the country we may now expect that it will return. He had expected to hear that the bank of Vienna, that bank whose solidity was so highly extolled, would upon the return of peace, have resumed its payments, and that not only the interest of the money we have lent to the Emperor would be punctually paid, but that the capital would be gradually liquidated. "Not one word says the noble secretary to this," exclaimed the marquis. "I see he smiles, however. It is really good fun! A jolly peace of business! An excellent joke! Well he may laugh at having so dexterously cheated the country out of six millions of money, for the country deserves to be cheated while it submits to be taxed without one murmur against the authors of the oppression." As to the prospects of peace, he had the sin upon his head of believing that the French government were always inclined to pacification; and he recommended ministers to make an unreserved declaration, stating their inclination to enter into negotiation, which, if it served no other purpose, would at least solve a problem which never yet had been solved, namely, what we are fighting for? It had been said, should this country be tricked into a peace, he would answer, that other powers had been tricked into it, and had left us to carry on the war alone. He deprecated that system of mysteriousness which had been assumed with regard to the sailors. Had he been in the House when the discontents on board the fleet first came under public discussion, he should have spoken his opinion freely upon them, and even have gone farther than a noble duke, who had been censured for rashness upon the occasion. He was of opinion still that the matter should undergo parliamentary investigation, in order that the real cause of the calamity might be ascertained. If the moment a question

had been asked by parliament on the subject it had been fairly answered by ministers, the circumstances which had occurred might have been avoided. Mystery always produced doubt and distrust. It was a maxim he had ever taught his children, whenever they got into a scrape, to tell the truth; it was a charm that would always extricate them. Disinterestedness was peculiarly the character of seamen, and ministers should have dealt with them upon that principle. There were various reports in circulation; it was, therefore, due to the officers of the navy, to the Admiralty, and to the sailors, that an examination of the causes which had produced the disturbances, should take place. As to French gold having been at the bottom of the revolt of the sailors, he could not credit the idea. British seamen were too open, too honest, and too disinterested to warrant the suggestion. Loyalty was the chief feature in the character of that valuable class of men, and they carried it so far, that it was notoriously the first and most essential ingredient of their toasts, their songs, and their merriment. They, of course, could not be easily led to entertain doubts of the sincerity of his majesty's ministers with respect to the concessions they demanded, if they were not in a certain degree warranted by the dilatory conduct of government on that important occasion. He was justified in declaring, on the authority of the most enlightened men in Ireland, that that oppressed country was then placed in a situation of the most imminent danger. He had in his pocket the resolutions lately entered into on that interesting subject by the gentlemen of the bar of Dublin, than whom there did not exist a more impartial, more independent, or a more enlightened set of men. He would earnestly recommend it to their serious attention. They stated, in energetic language, the vast perils to which that oppressed nation was subjected. Since he had alluded to these resolutions, he was concerned to find that a noble duke (the duke of Portland) was not then in his place; as he might, from having the subject of the resolutions recommended to his consideration, reap considerable benefit from attending to them. But perhaps the noble duke was employed in a more interesting manner. It was not improbable but he might be then engaged in settling the parish rates of Mary-le-bonne, or in speculating on the probable advantages arising from a re-

volution, on the same principles of profit, as those by which his Dutch ancestors acquired their possessions. Ministers were evidently laying the foundation of animosity between both kingdoms. Of sending over to Ireland fencibles and officers of rank to bathe their swords in blood, God only knew what might be the consequence! He recommended to ministers the advice given by M. Neckar to kings on the subject of coercion. That wise statesman, whose experience in one of the severest schools of adversity made what he said of great authority, strongly advised them not to provoke the people; to avoid coercion of every kind; and to adopt conciliatory measures, even in cases of the most pressing nature, as the most effectual means of making their subjects comply with their just views, and reconciling them to a state of peace and tranquillity. Buonaparté had unquestionably been the most formidable enemy this country had had to contend with. That celebrated general had over-run a vast extent of country, and reduced upwards of two millions of people. And who had been the cause of those successes? Certainly the noble lord (Grenville) who had provoked hostilities, and who, by the same mode of reasoning, had even outdone Buonaparté. For the French had, by his friendly assistance, not only added to their possessions three times the extent of territory acquired by Buonaparté, but had also experienced an increase of three times the number of their population. The noble lord might, therefore, be justly entitled to have a statue erected to him in the Pantheon, for achievements in favour of the French republic; and Buonaparté himself could not be supposed to envy such a measure, to the merit of which he was bound, both as a friend to his country, and an admirer of heroism, to subscribe.

Lord Grenville said, that he had forborne to enter into the consideration of the question, that others less immediately interested might decide on the merits of it. He would candidly admit, that were the question to be carried, it would give him the most heartfelt concern. To be deprived of the power of rendering every service within the scope of his abilities, both to his country and to his most gracious master, would indeed be the heaviest misfortune he could possibly experience. He therefore entertained the most sanguine hopes that the question would be

negatived, not certainly from any solicitude about his own personal views, for the present time was not fit for such considerations; but that he might remain in a situation that would enable him to give his hearty support to the measures of the executive government for the benefit and happiness of the community. The noble duke, in deploring the calamities of the present war, and in enumerating the distresses produced by it, had merely stated arguments which would apply with equal force against the prosecution of any war whatever. Such a mode of reasoning would go against the system of warfare altogether, however just, however called for by the most imperious necessity. But, did the noble duke's argument apply to the present war, which had not only been commenced on the ground of absolute necessity, but had been approved of by a vast majority of the country, and prosecuted, through all its stages, with the approbation of parliament? He believed the noble duke was the first man that ever proceeded to move a vote of censure against ministers without giving them some previous notice of it. But he had chosen to act a part peculiar to himself, and had thought proper to ground his accusation on the excess of expenses, which, from their nature it was totally impossible to foresee, or to provide for by certain estimates. The noble lords opposite considered it as a settled point, that the removal of ministers would be grateful to the public mind; but would they also affirm, that it would be equally grateful to the public mind, if they themselves were to occupy the place of administration. The conduct of his majesty's ministers had succeeded in preventing that anarchy to which the language of those who opposed them strongly tended. He had often heard, that revolutionary principles had made a considerable progress in the country, but to what bold lengths they extended, he had, until that night, little conception. What was the conduct of the same noble lords with respect to Ireland? They rashly proposed a direct interference in the internal concerns of that kingdom, after a most unqualified recognition of its independence. If their lordships had a right to interfere in any case, that case could only consist in an interference to protect and maintain the rights of his majesty, and of the parliament of Ireland; and if the government here had been able to send

any force for the purpose of saving Ireland from confusion, rapine, and desolation, such a conduct was, in his opinion, a fresh cause for unity and amity between both nations. A noble marquis had, in the warmth of expression, called Ireland an oppressed country. But what was the nature of that oppression? Was it oppression, in the mind of the noble marquis, to suffer the legislature of that country to make laws for itself? The noble marquis professed to talk of conciliation, yet while he dealt in professions he sought out with uncommon industry every principle of latent evil, and showed his rooted desire to frustrate the great end of conciliation.—When, therefore, he considered the present situation of public affairs, and the consequences likely to result from a servile compliance with the leading doctrines of the day, he should boldly say, that ministers would not tamely desert the honourable post which they filled, but would continue to direct all their efforts to the preservation of the constitution, and the happiness of the people. A reform of parliament was the chief measure proposed by noble lords. That measure he had ever opposed as a complete alteration of the constitution. To noble lords who so strongly held forth its necessity, he would calmly appeal, in the first place, whether any two persons were agreed as to the plan? And, secondly, if they were, whether that plan could be carried into effect without any thing farther being pursued? For his part, he was fully convinced of the danger of innovation. He knew that what commenced with reform, ended in revolution. He had even opposed a temperate reform; but the one offered for discussion was above all others peculiarly objectionable. It went to pluck up by the roots every right planted by the constitution—it went to destroy the most essential principles of liberty and property—it went to disfranchise corporations, to destroy chartered rights, to establish districts, or to characterize them more properly, departments, throughout the whole country, and as one member could only represent one department, it went to change every election over the kingdom into the nature of a Westminster election, with the benefits of which every one of their lordships was fully acquainted. At this moment it was the duty of every member of each House, instead of weakening the hands of government by ill timed motions, to rally round

the throne, to give additional strength to the executive power, and by an example at once dutiful and glorious, support that constitution, which had been framed by our ancestors, and which we were bound to transmit unaltered to our latest posterity. Speculation was sure to open the way to the horrors of revolution, and who could stop the torrent when once it burst? The reform proposed would destroy every corporation in the country, would be the ruin of every establishment, would have a tendency to divide the country into districts and departments, and in short introduce all the anarchy of an unqualified, and furious democracy. His lordship observed that the present mode of voting gave, by some means or other, an influence at elections to every man; but that universal suffrage would destroy itself. Parliament, he would again and again contend, did not possess so unlimited, so extraordinary a power, as to authorize such a reform. He entreated their lordships to reflect, that if they once opened the flood-gate to innovation, the torrent of anarchy would spread so forcibly and so wide, that it would not be in the power of their lordships, by opposing their feeble hands as a barrier to destruction, to prevent the constitution from being overwhelmed in general ruin. From the levity displayed by the noble marquis in the early part of his speech, and by his even condescending to mimicry, he had been led to think that the noble marquis designed to cheer the minds of their lordships by acting a farce after the deep tragedy that had been exhibited by the noble duke, who spoke before him; but the serious and alarming manner in which the noble marquis immediately afterwards treated several of the most delicate and dangerous topics ever touched on in debate, soon dissipated the smiles his ludicrous manner had excited.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* rose to explain, and said he had forgot the question of reform in his first speech. He had been a friend to the measure even before the noble duke who made the motion was born, and he was happy to leave it in such hands as those of his grace and of a respectable member for one of the universities in the other House (sir W. Dolben), who had lately been made a convert. He applauded Mr. Grey's motives and manner of proposing his plan; but he was of opinion, that any other than a gradual reform would be dangerous, and he there-

fore wished reform to be made while it could be done gradually, and not to delay its necessity till it would burst all bounds. On this point, the marquis particularly recommended a wise book, just published on the French Revolution, by M. Neckar, who gave it as his opinion, that if the king of France had conceded in time, the revolution would not have taken place; but the French court, like the English cabinet refused to make popular reforms till it was too late.

The Duke of *Leeds* rose to repel the idea that the existence of the constitution was inseparably connected with the continuance of the present ministry in power. The constitution, he hoped and believed, depended on itself alone, and that, with regard to its permanency, it was almost equally indifferent who held the reins of administration. His majesty's ministers had certainly been unfortunate, to say no more of it, in the conduct and consequences of the war, but he still gave them credit for their intentions. There was a wide distinction between misfortune and incapacity, and candour required that this distinction should ever be held in mind. The noble duke took notice of the distinction to be drawn between those who opposed particular measures and upon principle, and those who uniformly were in opposition to every administration. He mentioned having himself been in opposition once, when a member of the House of Commons; and he had learnt at that time, that the motives of every man in opposition were not always to be justified; "necessity makes men acquainted with strange bedfellows." He then formed one in a very mixed circle, and acquired some political intelligence which he should not easily forget. That the war was provoked, and was therefore just and necessary he had always conceived; that it was ill-conducted, he felt but too much reason to assert. One cause of the misfortunes of the country had never been mentioned, and the very naming of it would, he was aware, appear singular. It was that sentiment was the ground of proceeding. He knew it was an odd use of the term, and perhaps the first time that sentiment ever was supposed to be the cause of such serious mischief. With regard to the idea of parliamentary reform, he had ever considered it as a most dangerous remedy to resort to. It was a popular theme easy to expatiate upon, but difficult indeed to be put in execution. He had uniformly

opposed every proposition of that tendency, from a conviction of its impracticability.

The Earl of *Moir* could not admit that the king's servants had a right to take credit for that prosperity antecedent to the war, which indisputably arose from the energy and enterprise of our merchants, which in favourable times would even give vigour to our commerce, and which could only fail when cramped by the perverse conduct of ministers. The noble secretary of state complained of the motion as inflicting a heavy censure and penalty on ministers; it was meant in that view, since ministers had incurred a heavy penalty by the subversion of our credit, the disappointment of our hopes, and the failure of every object, with the attainment of which they had flattered the country. The noble secretary of state opposed the motion on the ground that, if it were acceded to, the constitution would probably be overturned. He would ever object to that mode of argument; it went to identify ministers with the constitution, to sink the confidence of the country in its own resources, and in the frame and form of its government. With regard to the war, he had from its origin disapproved of it; but finding that the country had engaged in it, he thought it his duty to offer every assistance in his power; he had done so, but he could not but think the war had been grossly mis-conducted. If instead of employing sir Charles Grey and sir John Jervis, with so many troops in the West Indies, they had been sent to assist the royalists in La Vendée, the country had long since been in possession of peace. With respect to Ireland, of which he would speak with caution, the number of those in that kingdom who wished for a separation from Great Britain were few indeed; but very different measures from those of coercion were necessary to conciliate the discontented of other descriptions. That the Catholics were well inclined was evident from the display of their loyalty when the French fleet visited Bantry Bay. And what was the return? After openly acknowledging their public spirit, the minister for Ireland almost immediately came to the House of Commons and roundly told them, that they were to expect no favour, for none would be granted them. Was it in human nature to sit down quietly under such treatment? In order to conciliate the different parties in Ireland, half mea-

asures would be of no avail; there was but one method to be taken—to grant the Roman Catholics the extent of their demands, with an openness calculated to satisfy their minds, and prevent the possibility of suspicion, of delusion, and to quiet the discontents of the Protestants with a moderate parliamentary reform.

Earl *Spencer* objected to the motion, because it was connected in its object with a change of measures, which he firmly believed, would prove ruinous to the country. If our situation was dangerous, and if awful changes were at hand, as a noble earl had predicted, it behoved every one to come to a rallying point, and stand by the established constitution. The tendency of the motion, so far from obviating existing difficulties, would, in his opinion, hasten the ruin of the country. He lamented that the affair of the seamen had been alluded to again. Whatever the noble mover might imagine, he could assure him, that his indiscreet mention of the subject in that House on a former day, and the misrepresentation of it, had done infinite mischief. It was one of those questions which ought not to come before parliament.

The Earl of *Darnley* was of opinion, that the public had more confidence in ministers than in the present opposition, whose invariable objection to every measure of government, proving that they acted more from party motives than on principle, disgusted the country; and of two evils they chose the least. With regard to Ireland, he was afraid the situation of affairs there had changed for the worse; a circumstance which he thought might not unfairly be imputed to the unguarded and inflammatory speeches delivered in that House. Though ministers had been extremely unfortunate, he could not therefore consider them as criminal, and on that ground should vote against the address.

The *Lord Chancellor* said, that the arguments of the noble duke and his motion directly contradicted each other. Their lordships had heard the noble duke's arguments which applied personally to ministers, and tended to establish a proof of the charge of that "miserable incapacity" in ministers, which the motion more than once imputed, but at the same time asserted, that it was not to that "miserable incapacity," but to the effect of a system of government, destructive of the exertions, and hostile to the constitution, that all the

misfortunes of the war were to be attributed. What, however, was this system of government so much complained of? Was it to be imputed as matter of crimination in ministers that the parliament of Ireland was permitted to judge for itself what was fit to be done for that country. That they did not attempt to interfere with the independence of the Irish legislature, and to violate a solemn compact made with the people of that country? From other parts of the motion it was evident that a change in the system, under the pretext of forwarding a parliamentary reform, was the great object: that it led to a system wilder than even that of universal suffrage, which went to disfranchise all corporations, to empower the House of Commons to uncreate their creators, and to disfranchise those who sent the members to parliament. If this sort of reform would at one sweep annihilate all lay corporations, ecclesiastical corporations would be gone of course. The term "freeholder" had hitherto been the pride of the best part of the nation; but by the plan proposed, this was to give way to the more favourite term of "pot-boilers;" they were expected to cut up by the roots whatever entered into the nature of franchise property, or privilege, and to introduce in its stead the principle of an Agrarian law. But it was said, "we do not take away any man's right of voting, but only extend it to others who are now without." He asked how the noble duke would like the application of this doctrine to his own estates—if they were taken away from him, and an equal right given to every pot-boiler in his village in common with himself? Would it satisfy the noble duke to have it said, it is true we took away your estate, but we give it back again. We give you as much land to possess as any man can reasonably desire, and as to the estate, we only let in the pot-boilers and cottagers in the vicinage to share it with you. Or, to illustrate it with respect to the livery of London, would it be satisfactory to them to be told that they still would enjoy their rights and franchises as liverymen, and the only difference was, that every pot-boiler in London would enjoy the same with them. He would remind the noble duke, and others of what had happened in France in 1789 and 1790; those who were foremost in revolutionizing the country were the first victims of the maxims and prejudices which they had laboured to infuse. He

entreated noble lords, therefore, to pause; and seeing that the avowed tendency of the motion was to introduce not merely a change of men but of system, and eventually of the constitution, he doubted not but they would agree with him in giving it their decided negative.

The Duke of *Bedford* refuted the interpretations put by the learned lord on the plan of reform, and alluded to the fallacy of comparing the elective franchise, a right possessed by individuals for the good of the whole, to private property. Did the learned lord consider votes as private property, because they were bought and sold? It was a right which, so far from being injured by being extended, would be improved; since extension would make it effectual.

The House divided on the duke of *Bedford's* motion: Contents, 12, Proxies, 2—14. Not contents, 65; Proxies 26—91. Majority 77.

Protests against the Rejection of the Duke of Bedford's Motion for the Dismission of his Majesty's Ministers.] The following Protests were entered on the Journals:

"Dissentient,

1. "Because, acting according to the ancient practice of the British constitution, and in conformity with its true principles, we hold the advisers of the crown to be responsible for the condition of the state; responsible for its internal peace, and general good government; for the preservation of all its ancient fundamental rights and liberties; for the protection of its commerce, of its credit, and the various sources of its prosperity and wealth; for the observance of order, discipline, and obedience in all the departments of the public force; for the honour and success of our arms (if unfortunately engaged in war); for the preponderance of the British power, and for the glory and splendor of the British name. Instead of recognizing in his majesty's ministers, that ability, foresight, and integrity, by which these its dearest interests are preserved, we have seen throughout a course of years, the affairs of the nation conducted with that incapacity, perfidy, and corruption, by which all great empires, from the beginning of the world, have found their ruin; and which in the particular state and situation of Great Britain, have nearly exhausted its resources and its credit, and annihilated its constitution, which have

brought shame upon its character in the eyes of foreign nations, and diffused largely among its subjects, mistrust in the intentions of their governors, hatred of their power, and contempt for their debility.

2. "Because encouraged by the uniform, implicit, and fatal confidence of this House in the conduct of ministers, a system of government has arisen, which, if it be farther persevered in, will render the fortunes of these realms utterly irretrievable, even should wisdom and virtue succeed in the minds of those ministers to ignorance and wickedness. That system is governed by principles the very reverse of those by which states and societies have hitherto been kept together. It is grounded on the doctrine that honour and reward is to attend on crime and folly: and that men are to be entrusted with power in proportion to their disposition to abuse it. Such perverted maxims of policy take from government all the support it derives from opinion. The opinion of its consistency is lost by ministers adopting and rejecting, as it suits the purpose of their power, systems which they alternately recommend and revile. The opinion of its justice is destroyed from seeing that power depends on a principle which confounds the first distinctions of right and wrong. All opinion of its vigour and efficiency is lost in the daily insults to its authority, to which they are compelled to submit. Every species of disorder is hence introduced. The example of those who govern is followed by those who obey. Nothing regular or orderly is found in the intercourse between subject and sovereign. State necessity, instead of being reserved for occasions of the last emergency, is resorted to as the constant, and every day practice of executive administration. In such a system there is neither order nor freedom; and it is the energy of freedom alone that can resist with effect the zeal of fancied superiority of military means. Where no power is left to correct the vices of an ill-administered commonwealth, nothing will remain to oppose to the enterprises of a foreign enemy.

3. "Because to suffer ourselves to be found by a foreign enemy in this distracted condition, when we have the means of avoiding it, seems to us highly impolitic, and wantonly to call down destruction upon the state. We see nothing in the present ministers so valuable as to induce us to risk, for their preservation, any part of the common interest. They have al-

ready kindled, by their odious prosecution of the catholics in Ireland, the flames of civil discord in that country. We believe that an immediate change of men and of measures would yet preserve the common ties by which the two countries are united. If, unhappily, measures of intolerance are to be sustained by the sword, and if that oppressed country be torn from the British crown, as America was severed from our empire, rather than that these ministers should incur the loss of their offices, we are unable to see in what Great Britain would be the gainer. If an invasion of these realms should be the result of delaying to open a sincere negotiation for peace, fully as we rely upon the zeal and bravery of our countrymen for the event, we do not conceive that the mischief of such an attempt would in any degree be compensated by finding, at the close of it, those ministers still in their offices. Above all things, we deem it highly inexpedient that any numerous or important class of the people should, in so perilous a moment, conceive themselves to be placed in the alternative between foreign conquest, and domestic usurpation. We think that in this crisis, no excuse is left for not calling forth the whole wisdom, and all that remains of the energy of the British nation; that it is among the crimes of these ministers that they have exhausted, in idle alarms for factious purposes, those resources which ought to have been preserved whole and unbroken, to meet the disasters which are impending over us; and for having set up a cry of loyalty against liberty, to the destruction of that real strength, by which alone our shores and our altars can, in the last extremity, be defended.

4. "Because such a system is dangerous to our present safety and existence as an independent state, and the support uniformly given to it, tends to degrade and vilify this House in the opinion of the people. For the first time in our history, the continuance of a minister in office, seems to be made a condition of the constitution. If that minister, after having reduced his country to the lowest ebb of shame and misery, shall continue to receive and to dispense all trusts, honours, and emoluments, and to be supported in his abandoned courses by this House, no motive will remain to love and reverence a constitution exhibited in these colours to the people, through the medium of this House. Feeling no interest in our

proceedings, they will lose all respect for our character, and all belief in our honour.

5. "Because we believe the present ministers to be utterly incompetent to the cure of the evils they have produced. As the principles on which they made the war offer no prospect for its success, those on which they have hitherto negotiated for peace, afford no hope for its attainment. As the improvidence and incapacity with which they have conducted the war have contributed so largely to produce the calamitous situation of Europe, and to build up the prodigious power of the French republic, we conceive that they possess not the means of obtaining safe or honourable terms of peace for this country. We cannot expect that they will hereafter cherish or encourage that spirit of liberty, under which, in former times, our greatness has grown and been matured. We are rather impressed with the fear, that under the same pretences which have caused all our present disasters, large military establishments will continue to be kept up, with a view of crushing all its efforts, and riveting still closer the fetters of the people; that released from the pressure of foreign hostility, they will have recourse to coercive measures in that unhappy country, where their oppressions have already provoked the people to resistance. We can hope for no economy from men whose extravagance and waste exceeds whatever has been heard of the mad prodigality of former periods. We can expect no salutary reformatations from those who have endeavoured to engraft upon, and blend with the substance of the constitution itself, those abuses by which their capacity is supported. Finally, we can expect, from such men and such a system, no other issue but the establishment of a dominion of ministerial terrorism, supported by parliamentary corruption, instead of the ancient constitution of this country, conducted according to the principles of the Revolution.

(Signed) "BEDFORD,
"CHEDWORTH."

"Dissentient to the first reason for the word 'perfidy' being used; agree to the other reasons.

"SUFFOLK and BERKSHIRE".

"Dissentient:

"Because the history of the world cannot produce an example of so many
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national distresses brought on any great empire, as have been inflicted on this country, within the space of the last four years, in consequence of the pernicious system of measures pursued by his majesty's ministers; and that judging reasonably and fairly from what has been experienced of their incapacity for the situations they hold, we are thoroughly authorized to pronounce, that, under their guidance we have to expect that greater calamities must inevitably fall upon the nation, whose exertions, in order to prevent them, will be vain, until a different system of government, under leaders more sagacious, and more attached to the true spirit of the constitution, shall be chosen to hold the reins of government, and to establish a system of public spirit and economy; and by the efficacy thereof, be able to restore the crown, parliament, and the nation, to their former lustre."

"GRAFTON

"SUFFOLK and BERKSHIRE"

Debate on Sir William Pulteney's Motion for a Bill to establish another Bank.]

May 30. Sir William Pulteney rose to make his promised motion upon the subject of a New Bank. He declared, he was not at all personally interested in the fate of his motion; if it did not succeed, he had, at least, attempted to induce the House to adopt a measure which, in his opinion, would render the most important service to the country. They all knew, that in February, the Bank applied to the chancellor of the exchequer with complaints of the exhausted state of their treasury, and of the great run which was then made upon them. The consequence of that representation was, an order of council prohibiting them to pay in specie, and requiring them to issue notes only. Afterwards a committee was appointed by that House to inquire into the necessity of continuing that order, and the powers of that committee were subsequently enlarged for the purpose of inquiring into the causes of the evil. Their reports were very voluminous, but it was not his intention to go into them at any length. The last step was a bill brought into parliament, sanctioning all that had been done, and continuing the prohibition until the 24th of June. There was no reason to suppose that the term limited by that bill would be shortened; on the contrary there might be a necessity for enlarging it. In the plan he should propose, he
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thought it quite immaterial to inquire whether the order of council was necessary or unnecessary; whether the associations would not alone have been fully sufficient to support the credit of the Bank, as they did in the year 1745. Certain it was, that, from what had been done, a Bank note might be as easily circulated as ever, and was as readily convertible into cash. But these were but temporary expedients; they would last but for a very short time; and, unless the Bank resumed its payments, its credit would not long be supported. The chancellor of the exchequer had also been obliged to bring forward another loan, which in its terms, was more disadvantageous for the country than any former one. He had also been obliged to make some compensation for the losses sustained by the subscribers of a former, or what was called the loyalty loan. Add to this, discounts were contracted, stocks low, and, though the credit of the Bank might be bolstered for a while, yet such expedients could not have a lasting effect. Some people, indeed, thought, that if peace was concluded all would soon be well again. Let those who reasoned in that manner recollect what passed after the 5th of April, 1782. The last loan made by lord North, in the American war, was better in the terms of it than that afterwards made by that good man lord John Cavendish in the time of peace; it did not, therefore, follow as a consequence, that, after peace was made, we should be immediately able to redeem ourselves from the distressed situation in which we were placed. Besides, in peace the spirit of enterprise would again break out, and there would be a thousand new channels of trade opened, all of which would require an additional quantity of property to support them. They would for a time operate as so many drains, and for a time aggravate the mischief. There could be no doubt that many of our distresses were occasioned by the war. In time of war there was necessarily an enlarged scale of expenditure; but that all our distresses resulted from the war was what he denied, and therefore all the evil could not be expected to cease with the war. He was convinced, however, that the House in its wisdom might supply a remedy, and that remedy was the establishment of a new Bank, which he now meant to propose. There was no doubt but the monopoly of the Bank stood in the way of such a measure. He entered

here into the history of the Bank. Their late conduct he considered as a forfeiture of their charter. Others might be induced to call it by the milder name of an act of government; and, indeed, the order of council was so worded: it was penned with the caution of making it appear as an act of government, and not an act of the Bank. His objection would not attach unless the old Bank failed to pay their creditors on the 24th of June; and if they did not, surely the public were entitled to have another Bank, which would perform their contract. If they did resume their payments, his bill would be unnecessary; but it could even then do no harm.

He confessed, however, that he wished another Bank to be instituted at all events, as it would aid the operations of the old Bank, and enable persons to discharge their debts to it. The directors of the Bank of England had always been men of considerable fortunes, and he would also propose a certain sum necessary as a qualification for a director of the new Bank, and also a limitation at a fixed point of the number of votes which the quantity of money should confer. But above all, he would provide that it should be totally exempted from any interference on the part of government. That was a connexion to which it must be a stranger. Speaking of the monopoly of the Bank of England, he asserted that it was on the whole a bad thing, injurious to the stockholder, and dangerous to the public and to government. The East India Company could not have retained their charter, if their affairs had not been pretty well administered; but it was at the same time observable, that the part of their trade, which was not under the monopoly, was much more prosperous than that part of it which was in such a situation. Scotland had two Banks, and the affairs of the old one were much more prosperous since the establishment of the new, though all the arguments were previously opposed to it which could be urged against a new Bank of England on the present occasion. If, then, two Banks were found to have a beneficial effect in Scotland, he saw no reason to distrust, that advantages still more important would result from a similar competition here. There could be no fear of a sufficient capital being raised. The real wealth of the country was as great as ever it was; which was exemplified in the two loans of eighteen millions

each, made in the present session; and as a farther proof of the immense opulence of the nation, it need only be remarked, that seven millions sterling had been expended since the last peace in the construction of canals. It might be said, that this proposal was improper in a time of war and distress, as the capital of the new Bank must be in cash withdrawn from circulation; but a little reflection would show that this idea was not well founded. The cash of the capital, it was true, must be in some measure withdrawn from circulation, but this would be but a temporary subduction, only for the short space between the collection of its cash and the issue of their notes. He admitted that there was a very great difference between cash and wealth, but it did not follow that there was now less cash than wealth remaining in the country. It was never proved that any great quantity of hard cash had, in the present war, been sent out of the country. On the contrary, he was of opinion that there was full as great an abundance of it as ever; but as the country bank notes which had been a great circulating medium before, were now for a great part withdrawn, cash was substituted in their place, and dispersed all over the kingdom. The subscribers to the new Bank would at first be contented with small profits, with a view to the permanency and future prosperity of the institution; but no person would subscribe except with a view to some advantage, and to show how this would arise, he stated the profits upon discounts, and the coining and importing of gold and silver. Instead of doing any mischief, or impeding the operations of the old Bank, it was in the nature of competition, that one should act as a check upon the other, and be the surest means of preventing mismanagement; and each would be upon the watch to take advantage of any circumstances which might give it a run upon its rival.

Would the new Bank encourage speculations? There were two views in which speculators were to be considered. Independent of chimerical schemes, there were others which ought to be encouraged, though it was usual to say, "the bubble burst," when they happened to fail from unavoidable circumstances. Those failures were in general to be attributed to the withdrawing of the usual aids by which they were supported. Thus it was with country banks, which

were not aerial schemes, but established upon solid property; but they still failed in consequence of losing that aid by which they were supported. Thus was it also frequently with buildings, and many other schemes which would be successful and profitable, if the projector could complete them; but frequently by the loss of some assistance on which he relied, the individual was left to the mercy of his creditors, and all his hopes and projects utterly destroyed. The new Bank would be enabled to supply a part of its capital in the support of such undertakings, which were certainly useful, as in all well regulated states, the number of reasonable, industrious men greatly exceeded those, who, in the bad meaning of the word, were speculators or spendthrifts.

Would the increase of paper raise the price of provisions? This opinion, though somewhat prevalent, he held to be exceedingly erroneous. The price of any article must depend on the proportion of the quantity to the demand. But when the demand exceeds the quantity, the rise is greater on provisions than any other article, on account of the necessity every man feels of an immediate supply. On other articles the purchase may be postponed; but provisions cannot be delayed. The increase of paper must be proportioned to the increase of coin, and the latter must be gradual and slow in every country, but must have a necessary effect upon the price of provisions. In this country the price of provisions was now four times greater than it was when America was discovered; but in the same period the quantity of gold and silver was increased fourfold also; so that, strictly speaking, it was not true that provisions were dearer; but gold and silver were so much diminished in value. The only real difference thus created was, that people had more trouble in counting the pieces over. In large manufacturing places, where great numbers collected within a small compass, the price of beef and mutton was high; at the very time that cattle were killed in other places almost for the sake of their hides. But these inequalities must always be attendant on difference of situations and circumstances; and the fact was, that in general the inconveniences in one way were counter-balanced by advantages in some other. He quoted the authority of Adam Smith, to show that the quantity of paper did not increase the price of provi-

sions; and added, that they were never so low in Scotland as when most paper was circulated. They began and continued to rise at the same time in England and in France; and yet in the latter country at that period there was no paper currency whatever. It was impossible to make any standard for the price of provisions here where the climate was so variable. For many years, we never had had two good seasons successively, though it frequently happened that we had two or more bad ones succeeding each other.

He then contended, that the effect of an increase of coin and notes was to counteract monopoly. At present we had no guard against the misconduct which might arise even from the prejudices of the Bank. The monopoly of the Bank, or of any other company, was no better than a premium for indolence and neglect; competition would animate the spirit of enterprise and industry. One company was not sufficient to administer properly the pecuniary concerns of this nation, in the present state of things. Formerly, trade was carried on by barter, or some devices to represent value; but experience soon taught us to use metal, which did not perish by keeping, as a circulating medium, and the diffusion of it had been of wonderful aid to industry since the discovery of America. The Bank of England was the first, that by the issue of its notes, increased the circulating medium, and other banks in foreign countries had since imitated their example, without at the same time, enjoying a monopoly. By withdrawing its discounts, the Bank had a power which could not be possessed before the issue of notes, to do the utmost mischief to the country by withdrawing the circulating medium. Their conduct towards the public had been, on many occasions, at least questionable and ambiguous. Without accusing them of being disposed to do any mischief, it was sufficient for his purpose to show that they had the means of doing it. Circumstances might arise, in which their particular views might possibly incline them to such a measure; and the only power to control them on such an occasion was, another bank, capable of general accommodation. Something of this kind had actually happened in 1793, when the Bank diminished its discounts, and obliged the government to employ exchequer bills as a circulator; which, however, were attended with considerable loss to the

holders. The evils which it was in the power of the Bank to inflict in time of war, by means of its monopoly, were beyond calculation; for by withdrawing the circulating medium, the injury to the public would be as great as the encouragement and assistance it would afford to the enemy. The effect of this power was felt in a thousand instances; and particularly in government securities, for it was as unerring as the influence of the atmosphere upon the thermometer, that when the Bank diminished its discounts, the value of government securities fell in the same proportion. The conduct of the Bank in many cases was directly opposite to what it ought to be. When cash was withdrawn, nothing was more evident than that its representative should be increased; yet the Bank withdrew a three-fold proportion of its notes for every diminution made upon its cash. Its neglect of the means of keeping up the circulation was the strongest argument for instituting a rival. For the last three years, in which there was the greatest demand for money, the coinage was diminished in its usual proportion to the deficiency of 4,200,000*l*. From the correspondence between the Bank directors and the chancellor of the exchequer in 1795, it would appear, that they were then sensible of the drain for cash upon them; and by the Report of the secret committee it would be seen, that within four days of their applying for the interference of government to suspend payment of cash, when Mr. Pitt recommended the importation of foreign bullion, the directors said, they were considering of it; and would do what they could; that is, in nineteen months after feeling the first effects of the run upon them, they were "considering" only of the means by which it could be counteracted. The price which foreign bullion might have borne at the time, was no apology for them; for possessing a monopoly they had a right to provide even at a loss. Their purchasing it from Portugal was a proof that they did not understand their business, and were incompetent to the management of their own affairs. They complained to Mr. Pitt of the high price of gold in Portugal; but that was not the place where they ought to apply for it. The cheapest price at which gold could be purchased in Portugal, was 4*l*. 8*s*. 6*d*. per ounce. It was there a contraband article, and the price was enhanced by the risk, and the neces-

sary convoy in coming round the enemy's coast. Gold, however, without any of these risks, was to be bought at Hamburgh, where it rolled from one merchant to another like a storm, for 3*l.* 18*s.* 6*d.* per ounce. Yet the country was left to suffer, because the Bank was so very ignorant of its own affairs. The Bank of England was not justified on any price that gold may sell for. The country banks paid in general 300*l.* a year for the bare carriage of gold to supply their customers; and he knew one that paid so much as 1,600*l.* What excuse, then, could be admitted for the Bank of England, which contracted the quantity of its cash at the very time when it was most wanted? An hon. gentleman on a former debate had said, that no more was wanting than the restoration of confidence. In that sentiment he perfectly concurred. But how was that confidence to be restored? By regularity in payment, and an increase of a circulating medium in which the public could confide. But instead of regularity in payment, there was now no payment whatever to be had at the Bank. The repayment of the advances to government had given them no assistance whatever to recommence payment in specie; and if they did not so recommence on the 24th of June, they would forfeit their monopoly, though they might still conduct their business as a trading company.

Would the new Bank affect the interest of the stockholders in the old? He maintained that it would not. The profits of the stocks arose principally from the discounts at 5 per cent, for though they traded also in gold and bullion, that appeared to be a business very little attended to. There were three species of revenue in a country; 1, the rents of lands; 2, the wages of labour; and 3, the produce of the stocks. The two former always partook of the distresses of the public; but the last, as Adam Smith truly observed, was the most benefited when the government was nearly ruined. It must also be considered, that the interest of the Bank directors was frequently in opposition to that of the proprietors. The directors were always persons of great opulence, and who had a great command of money. In discounts they could make no more than 5 per cent of which the stockholder had his share; but in the distresses of government the director, by subscribing to loans, &c. had an opportunity of employing his money to more advantage.

It was no wonder that the discounts were so frequently contracted.—That the transactions of the new Bank would interfere with those of the old, was not to be contradicted; but from this it was not to be inferred, that it would diminish its business; on the contrary, he maintained that it would augment it. It would also add to the advantages of the stockholder, by introducing a system of economy very much wanted; for it was the opinion of foreigners at least, that the Bank of England had been much too lavish in the expenditure on the buildings. The stock also of the old Bank, reduced as it is, from 180*l.* to 109*l.* would soon rise rapidly, and every kind of useful speculation would be assisted and supported. He then returned again to contend for his motion, on the authority of Dr. Smith, who it was well said, would persuade the present generation, and govern the next. He did not mean to push his present plan, should the Bank of England open for payment in specie on the 24th of June, or a reasonable time afterwards. But in the mean time he would submit his plan to the House, which they might adopt or reject, as they thought proper. He then moved, "That leave be given to bring in a bill for the Establishment of another Bank, in case the Bank of England shall not pay Cash for their Notes on the 24th day of June 1797."

Sir *Francis Baring* declined following the hon. baronet through his very able general reasoning, but doubted whether the plan he proposed would facilitate the general accommodation of the public, or of individuals, increase the circulation of specie or of good paper, or restore the Bank to its former functions. A new Bank would, in his opinion, impede these objects. He hoped the Bank would be able to resume its functions on the 24th of June, or soon after; but he thought that such a measure as this, would make that more difficult than it seemed to be at present. He considered the principle on which the Bank was established to be that of a body corporate to assist the public in the way of loan when that was necessary; to assist individuals with accommodation, under certain restraints of prudence, in the way of discount; and to aid the general circulation by the issue of its notes for cash. This aid to general circulation was infinitely of the greatest importance to the public; for in this respect they were a general security for cash deposited, as

well as an engine for its general circulation. After this came the other two objects, the accommodation to the public by loan, and to individuals by discount. After the two first were provided for, the Bank stood on a solid rock; and individuals ought to be accommodated with discount to a reasonable extent; but it did not appear to him that either of these objects would be forwarded by the present motion.

Mr. *S. Thornton* said, he had rather hear the opinion of others than deliver his own, upon a subject in which his personal character was concerned. But as allusion had been made to those with whom he acted, he should make a few observations. He then took some notice of the share which the Liverpool, Hull, Bristol, and other banks had in creating the drain upon the Bank of England, some time previous to the order in council. It was not so easy a matter to import bullion to advantage into this country, as some gentlemen seemed to imagine. The coinage of this country took bullion at a fixed price, consequently, when bullion was very high the coinage itself was melted down. Bullion was at the time the hon. baronet alluded to, in Hamburgh at 4*l.* 4*s.* an ounce, and the coinage here at about 3*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* Bullion then might have been imported, but it would only have staid with us until it could have been re-shipped and exported, for the purpose of being sold to us again. The purchase of bullion was matter of great nicety, and not to be carried on without judgment and care. This country was, for its finances and commercial character, the envy of the rest of the globe. We had seen Holland and other commercial countries, rise in prosperity under the management of but one bank. In Scotland there were certainly two, but no argument could be drawn from this, for even they had much dependence on the Bank of England.

The *Solicitor General* said, that much of the hon. baronet's argument had been founded on the clause in the act which served as a check on the Bank; but there was a great difference between continuing that clause, and erecting a new Bank. The question then was this, whether it was most easy to restore credit to its former state by creating a new bank, or to give to the present all the functions of which it was capable? The Bank was adequate to the purposes for which it was

established. No possible good could arise from the measure, but, on the contrary, much mischief, for a new Bank would tend to create doubts about the present Bank. The hon. baronet had said that it wanted an increase of exertion, which a rival bank would give it. This he took to be a very mistaken notion; for, so far from increasing, it would damp and clog its exertions, by rivalling it in the procuring of specie; as the persons concerned in a new Bank must at the very outset provide specie to open with, and this hoarding of dead cash in another coffer would prevent the Bank from resuming its former functions.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, he had always desired to see public credit re-established in the person of the Bank, and therefore he had hitherto opposed the ideas of the worthy baronet upon that subject. But he did not find, that any idea was entertained that the Bank was to resume its payments in cash. He differed from the worthy baronet as to the first duty of the Bank. That hon. member looked upon the Bank as having been instituted for the purpose chiefly of accommodating government. He wanted a public bank that would proceed on the narrow ground of looking to itself, and to itself only, and he was persuaded that until that was the case there would be no such thing in this country as a paper circulation founded upon real credit. If the Bank did not open on the 24th of June, he saw no reason for hoping that they would open at all. It was a farce to call that a bank which was never to give for paper any thing but paper. It was admitted that the Bank had, with great facility, assisted government from time to time. Now if the Bank was to be considered as bound to continue that assistance, the distresses of the government must continue to be the distresses of the Bank. But he maintained that this was a practice which was against the general principle on which the Bank ought to act, and on which alone it ought to be supported. The Bank should say this, "We know nothing of the distresses of government; we look to the notes which we have issued, and we are determined to pay them when they become due." When we had an issue of paper, it was ridiculous to think of confidence in that paper upon any principle but that of its being paid when it became due. If the Bank was allowed to use any discretion in relieving the necessities of government in prefer-

ence to paying the demands of individuals upon themselves, it could never have the confidence of the public, and fatal inconvenience would soon arise; whereas, by separating the Bank from the government, this truth would soon appear—that it was owing to the war that all these difficulties had arisen. By taking it to be the duty of the Bank to assist government in all its distresses, the Bank could never be reasonably expected to open its payments in specie to its creditors; it must give paper for paper for ever; so that the Bank would have five per cent for giving its opinion upon the solvency of government; and supposing them to owe ten millions upon their present paper, they would, in the course of fourteen years, by the operation of compound interest, realize to themselves the whole of that property. This was in reality giving nothing to the public creditor; and, therefore, unless he heard that the Bank was to pay in cash at some given time, he should be for opening another bank. With regard to the notes of the Bank, he did not expect them to be at a discount, even although the Bank should not pay in specie; for now that we should require annually the sum of 26 millions in the collection of taxes, that would keep them at par, while they were received in payment at the exchequer; for any man receiving a large sum in Bank notes might readily pass them to a distiller, or any other person, who had two or three hundred thousand pounds to pay to the revenue. Thus the load of our debt kept up the credit of our bank notes. Where the system was to end it was not difficult to guess. He wished the Bank to resume a character for punctuality, and he should wish to support it under that character; but as no hope had been held out that such was to be the case, he was under the necessity of supporting the motion. He spoke of the plan of Mr. Hartsinck in terms of great approbation, and said, that in his mind it promised to be very useful.

Mr. Pitt said, he was free to acknowledge that it was not the principal duty of the Bank to look to the accommodation of government, as such; at the same time he must think the Bank would feel an advantage in identifying its interests with that of the public; it could not consult its prosperity so well by adopting any other line of conduct. He believed it to be a sound opinion that the public credit should be established on the same ground

with, and in the person of the Bank of England. He denied, that either government or the Bank had the interest that had been alleged, in the latter's not resuming its operations at the time proposed. The establishment of two banks would afford no relief as to the payment of taxes, nor be a benefit were they to have more notes in circulation than the property of the country. To the general opinion of the solidity of the Bank, it was to be principally ascribed that bank notes were at par. With many of the hon baronet's remarks he perfectly agreed; but unless the Bank was found incompetent to issue the quantity of paper wanted in circulation, or was unwilling so to do, the question would not be so much, whether a new bank was necessary, but rather, whether the present Bank did not want farther assistance, to enable them to carry on their extensive concern with advantage to the country at large? As to the doctrine of monopoly, he acknowledged it was unfavourable in many cases, and if the question now were, whether a new charter should or should not be granted to the Bank, it might deserve consideration; but he thought gentlemen should be extremely cautious, on such a subject, of drawing any arguments from mere theory, or from examples in other countries, in order to give up certain explained and experienced benefits. He did not see that the monopoly of the Bank was hostile to the interests of the country. How could the hon. baronet ascertain that two banks would answer better than one in respect to public convenience? It did not follow, that because there were two large banks in Scotland, there should be two rival banks in London. The Bank had, in his opinion, done its duty; nor did he see any cause for blaming the conduct of the directors because they had not imported more bullion; which ought rather to be left to natural causes to find its way into the country by the balance of trade in our favour, than to artificial means. He did not say that no circumstances could arise, in which it might not be proper to import coin, but their not having done so, did not prove the ill conduct of the directors. A successful progress had been made for some weeks past, towards re-opening the Bank for payments in specie; but no person had ever determined the precise moment when this ought to be done, or that it should positively be on the 24th of June next. He saw no reason why the

Bank should lose its charter, though this should not be the case. He concluded by giving his negative to the motion.

Mr. *Manning* said, there was reason to hope that the exertions of the Bank would soon enable the directors to re-open it for paying in specie. Vast quantities of gold had flowed into the Bank, as well from the country as from abroad, and the bankers felt no inconvenience from the want of it.

The House divided :

Tellers	
YEAS	{ Sir W. Pulteney - - - } 15
	{ Mr. Fullarton - - - }
NOES	{ The Lord Carrington - - } 50
	{ Mr. Dent - - - }

So it passed in the negative.

Debate in the Commons on Compensation to the Subscribers to the Loyalty Loan.]

May 31. The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means, and the 18 millions Loan bill, called the Loyalty Loan, being referred to the said committee,

Mr. *Pitt* said, that whatever regret he might feel at imposing any additional burthens upon the public, yet some proposition such as he was about to submit to the committee was called for by the peculiar circumstances of the case. The state of the funds at the period when the persons who were the object of the measure, which he should propose came forward with voluntary subscriptions to such an extent, he apprehended ought to be considered. He thought they ought to be considered as persons who came forward with a view of aiding the public service without any personal advantage; for there was no chance in their favour at the time: they must have viewed it as a transaction in which they were likely to lose rather than to gain; and the burthen of that loan was considerably less upon the public than it must have been, had they not come forward in the way they had done. They did not, however, foresee that they would have met so heavy a loss. They had, therefore, an equitable, though, he admitted, no absolute ground of right to apply to the country for some relief. The whole of the loss ought not to fall upon persons who had so meritoriously come forward. The loss was 4 per cent before the payment of the deposit. The discount afterwards rose to 7, 8, and was now at 14 per cent. The subscribers

had made good their several payments; a circumstance which would not the less dispose the House to assist them. For the cause of this loss, we were to look to the various events that had taken place in Europe; the temporary interruption of our public credit; and the circumstance of his being compelled to come forward for an additional loan for the public service of the year. On these grounds, he felt it his duty to propose to the committee to contribute to the relief of those meritorious individuals. He knew of no particular rule whereby to judge of the losses of the different classes of the subscribers; but he should propose generally that they should be allowed 5*l.* for every 100*l.* original stock, that was, that each person should be entitled to 7*s.* 6*d.* long annuity for every 100*l.* The whole amount of the burthen upon the public would be between 60 and 70,000*l.* He therefore moved a resolution to the above effect.

Mr. *Dent* said, he could by no means give his vote for the measure proposed. He dreaded it as a matter of future example. No man could calculate the evil which such a precedent might bring upon the public. In 1779 and 1780 there had been loans in which the subscribers had suffered much, but nothing of this kind was granted to relieve their distresses. There was a shifting of tontine to relieve them a little; but here was to be voted away at once nearly 70,000*l.* of the public money, and for the payment of which, taxes were to be levied for ever on the people. He should certainly move, "That the chairman do leave the chair without putting this resolution." The 3 per cents were now between 47 and 48; when this loan was entered into they were about 56. Was not every holder of stock in the same situation as these gentlemen? He did not see in their case any thing to entitle them to especial favour. If the subscribers had profited 15 per cent they would not have suffered the public to partake of the advantage; but they found it to be a losing speculation, and called upon the public to bear a part of the loss. He saw no reason, nor justice, nor fairness, nor equity in this. They did not come forward as subscribers with any idea that they were to lose. If they came forward out of ostentation, they ought to pay the expense which attended that ostentation. He found it his duty to move, "That the chairman do now leave the chair."

Mr. *W. Smith* agreed with much of what had been said by the hon. gentleman. The ground of right to this assistance was given up by the chancellor of the exchequer. The claim, however, must rest upon some foundation. These gentlemen either came forward as good patriots to support a just and necessary war, or they came forward to make what they thought a good bargain for themselves. Many gentlemen subscribed to this loan, expecting it to be a profitable one. Others had put down their names, not because they thought it would be a profitable one, but because they were afraid of being marked men if they did not do it. Many bankers, some of them members of that House had subscribed from that motive. He would not disgrace the title of patriot by calling such men patriots. The mass of the subscribers to this loan were persons who had made a bargain, by which they expected to gain ten per cent for three years for their money, with an absolute security for the capital at the end of that time. Were men who expected to have double the amount of legal interest, together with a security for the capital, to be considered as patriots for so lending their money? He really saw no pretence for this measure, nor did he see any description of men who deserved more to lose than these men did. Had these persons any just claim, he would agree to relieve them, great as the burthens upon the people were; because nothing could be so great a weight upon them as that of injustice; but as they had no such claim, he must support the motion for the chairman leaving the chair.

Mr. *Pitt* said, he had always allowed that the subscribers had no claim of right; but having told them that there would be no loan above 18 millions that year, they were in equity entitled to some consideration on that account. The question was, did or did not the subscribers lend their money at less than the market price of the funds? and if so were they not entitled to consideration?

Mr. *Tierney* said, that the proposition of the chancellor of the exchequer was nothing less than ripping up an act of parliament, by an attempt to do what he called justice, when he himself allowed, that from the lapse of time and circumstances which had intervened, justice was rendered impossible. Add to this, that the proposition was made at the end of a session, in which burthens had been im-

posed upon the people to an amount beyond all precedent, a proposition by which they were called upon to vote 70,000*l.* a year, which, at fourteen years purchase, was one million sterling of the people's money. If relief was to be given, why was not a petition presented by the sufferers to the House stating their loss, and praying for indemnification? But when this mutiny arose among the loyalists, they, like other mutineers, appointed delegates; for five months they had had conferences almost every week with the chancellor of the exchequer. What wonder was it, then, that the right hon. gentleman asked, with an air of triumph, what part of the nation had lost their confidence in him? Certainly not the city of London. And what was the reason of the city of London remaining firm in their allegiance to his administration? Because they had a negotiation pending with him upon the result of which depended one million of money! Was there any man at all acquainted with the city who did not know that a consideration of this magnitude would procure its support to any administration? And where was the surprise, when this bonus was promised, that the mutiny did not show itself in such a way as to endanger his situation? When the loan was subscribed for, the subscribers were praised for their loyalty. It had unfortunately come out, however, that loyalty was a commodity of such a kind that in this country it would not keep for two months. If the worst enemy to England had projected a measure essentially to injure her interests, they could not have been more successful than the right hon. gentleman in bringing forward the present proposition. It proved that we were engaged in a war in which those who offered their lives and fortunes in its support were not serious in one word they said; and the most extravagant railer against the government and constitution of the country could not take better ground than upon the vote of that night.

Mr. *Jolliffe* condemned the measure, as one of the most improvident he had ever heard of. Those who had subscribed, had done so with their eyes open. They made a merit of it at the time, and there was the greatest injustice in requiring any remuneration now; since the funds might hereafter rise considerably, and then they would receive a considerable sum by the difference in the price of stocks. He considered the transaction, on the part

of many of the subscribers, as in some degree fraudulent; for he believed many had set down their names for sums of money which they never were possessed of, and if they received a remuneration for such a procedure, it was an encouragement of fraud.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, it had always been a rule, in every question in which any member was personally concerned, that he should withdraw, and not vote on the occasion. He hoped this rule would be strictly conformed to in the present instance.

Mr. *Bastard* said, that as unfavourable opinions were abroad of the integrity of that House, he should like to see the names of the persons to whom the compensation was to be paid. He entreated the committee to pause and consider what they were about to do, for it was absolutely impossible that taxation could go on. The remuneration was not only objectionable in its principle, but in the mode by which it was to be carried into execution; as persons who had bought shares yesterday might, by collusion with the broker, to-morrow receive 3 per cent. bonus on each share. What praise could be due for such patriotism as that? Opinions had gone forth, that ministers and their friends had got large shares in the loan, and the present measure would only tend to confirm them. He should vote decidedly against the motion.

Mr. *Tierney* hoped, that those who were personally interested would decline voting.

The Committee divided: Yeas, 40; Noes, 26.

June 1. The Resolution being reported, Sir *John Sinclair* stated three objections to it in point of form: 1, That the resolution was inconsistent with acts passed this session, and therefore could not be entertained; 2, That the resolution should have been voted in a committee of supply; and 3, That the regular mode would have been for the persons desiring relief to have come to the House with a petition recommended by the crown.

The *Speaker* said, that in regard to the first objection, the rule of the House was, that no two resolutions, nor any two bills contradictory to each other, could be passed in the same session. It remained for the House to decide whether this resolution was contradictory, or only ex-

planatory or supplementary, as in the latter instances, the hon. baronet's objections would not apply. In regard to the second objection, the hon. baronet did not appear to have understood the practice of the House, since a committee of ways and means, or of the House, might approve any resolution for extending the grants of a former committee, with this exception, that no additional burthens could be imposed, except in the land tax. In regard to the third objection, a petition might with propriety have been presented, though not without a recommendation from the crown, but that did not preclude any other mode. This was a transaction between the public and an individual; and if it was disadvantageous to the individual, it was not irregular to propose, that he should not be held to the original bargain. Here, he had to observe, as a stronger proof of the power to make such a proposition, that in case a petition was moved to be presented, and the crown refused its recommendation, it was in the power of any member afterwards to bring forward a motion to the same effect. The only objection, therefore, which admitted of doubt was the first; and he left it to the decision of the House, whether this resolution was contradictory, or explanatory, or supplemental.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, he had listened with great deference to the opinion of the chair, and he assented to the statement given on two of the objections. He thought, however, that the resolution was contradictory to former resolutions in this session, as it went to alter an agreement and bargain already made, and to make terms contrary to that bargain sanctioned by an act of parliament. Had it been attempted to take part of the profit from the contributors, would not the form have been objected? He should be sorry, however, if the question was got rid of, merely by a point of form; for never was there a case of more rank depravity, or one that more strongly deserved the name of an iniquitous job, than this transaction. If it was consistent with regularity, he would wish to ask, whether there had been any promise or engagement with the contributors to the loan of 18 millions, that there should be no other loan for the year?

Mr. *Pitt* said, he understood the question before the House, to be a question of form, which must be disposed of before any other point was taken up.

Sir John Sinclair having consented to wave the question of form,

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the case here was not to undo a bargain, by the act of one party, which had been contracted between two. It was to give to the contributors an option of which they might avail themselves. If the House thought it a matter of sound policy to prevent such a loss to the individual as might in future be prejudicial to the public interest, they would not think that any expense which it might occasion was idly thrown away. It had never been contended by gentlemen on the other side, that such a hard bargain should not be driven for the public as to endanger so considerable a loss to individuals as might deter them from coming forward to assist the public. If, on the present occasion, unexpected circumstances had produced such a loss as would be highly injurious to individuals, was not this policy to be considered? He was not surprised that those who had uniformly opposed the war should be desirous to hold out in odious colours those who had stood forward to support the country in a moment of danger and difficulty. There was no intention to benefit any particular class of men in this transaction. The plan of the loan embraced all those who chose to contribute, and if those who do not generally support government are not those who would enjoy the advantage of the allowance, it was because they did not think proper to stand forward at a moment when the public service required support. As to the question of the hon. gentleman, no express agreement had been made as to any future loan. He placed the propriety of the present measure upon grounds of general policy, far outbalancing any pecuniary burthen it might occasion. The measure was not without example. There was a precedent for it in times to which no man could object. In 1759, the interest to the contributors to a loan was allowed to commence half a year sooner than was fixed by the terms of the bargain, which gave an advantage to the subscriber of two and a half per cent.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, that properly speaking, there were three parties to be considered in a loan. The chancellor of the exchequer, the subscribers to the loan, and the House of Commons. Taking it in this view, the chancellor of the exchequer had deceived the original subscribers, and was now about to impose upon the

House, and defraud the public. With respect to the 18 millions loan, the subscribers might be taught to believe that there was not to be another loan, but the chancellor of the exchequer could not expect any thing but that there must have been another loan, for at that very moment he knew there was a deficiency of seven millions. As to the merit of the subscribers to this loan, he was willing to give them full credit for their public spirit; but the measure of the chancellor of the exchequer made it a species of selfish public spirit, and a mercenary avaricious generosity. If they were left to bear the whole of this loss, they would be entitled to the character of patriots; but this measure took away all the grace of their public ardour. Should this bargain ever turn out profitable to the subscribers by the increase of the funds, there was no provision for the return of a single pound to the public of what was now proposed to be voted to these loyal, money-lending gentlemen. It was quite ridiculous to pronounce panegyrics on the loyalty or the patriotism of subscribers to loans. It was better, because honest, to confess that they came forward with a loan in expectation of profit. The minister knew this. He had by this loan lost much of his credit with the monied men; he wished to restore himself to their favour, and therefore he came now to the House to ask them to repair his credit out of the public purse.—He had heard with astonishment, for it was impossible for him to attend the House yesterday, that many gentlemen had given their votes that this money should be raised upon the public, which money was, a great part of it at least, to go into their own pockets, for many of them were subscribers to the loan. He could not conceive any thing more indecent nor more indiscreet. At a time, when the House was extremely unpopular, and deserved to be so, for gentlemen to disgrace its proceedings by votes so mean and selfish, was madness. From ministers they expected nothing but deception. But if these proceedings were carried on, the House would become more unpopular even than the ministers. From the one the people expected only to be cajoled and plundered; but from the House they expected at least some attention to their interests. This was, indeed, taking away part of the public odium from the minister and fixing it upon the House. Gentlemen should beware of doing this

when they saw such bodies of men in a state of desperate insubordination; for they would increase the danger which now threatened the state, by rendering the House despicable in the eyes of the people. There was one point more which he must press in the way of a question, and he expected an answer from the highest authority in that House. He wanted to know whether any member ought to be permitted to vote on a question in which he was interested personally and in a pecuniary sense? They could not even be examined as witnesses in such a case in a court of law, and they would be objected to by the same rule as jurors. He hoped these gentlemen would feel the delicacy of their present situation, and withdraw when the question was put. If they did, he doubted whether the minister would be successful upon the present motion.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, that with respect to the conduct of any individual member, he apprehended that nobody had any right to question the motive of it; that must be left as a question of conscience and individual feeling. Every man knew best himself whether he deserved such imputations as had been thrown out that night or not; and he knew of no means of deciding it. Gentlemen might, if they pleased, retire from delicacy, because they were subscribers; but he thought there was a duty incumbent upon them paramount to all others, he meant the duty of a member of parliament to express by his vote his opinion upon every public measure that came before him, and upon that view of the subject he had made up his mind to vote for the question. Although he was a subscriber to the amount of 10,000*l.*, he was above being influenced in his vote by a few hundreds. He trusted that other gentlemen felt as he did; but should there be any difficulty upon that subject, members might declare their intention of not benefiting by the measure which was now proposed.

Lord *W. Russell* thought nothing of the patriotism of these subscribers, if they accepted of the price which was now proposed to be given for it. Such patriotism would be patriotism brought to market, and knocked down by the hammer to the best bidder. There were, however, gentlemen among these subscribers who really felt as patriots ought to feel, and who dissented from this measure, among

whom he mentioned, to his honour, Mr. Hoare, a banker, who was a subscriber to the amount of 50,000*l.*

Mr. *Manning* said, he wished to do neither more nor less than his duty. He wished, with submission, to put to the chair a question, which was, whether a member of that House, who was a subscriber, could, consistently with the practice of the House, vote upon the present question? This was not a remote or contingent interest in the members of the House who were subscribers, but a direct pecuniary interest. He should be extremely sorry to withhold his vote, if it was right to give it; he should also be sorry to give it, if the practice of the House was against his voting.

The *Speaker* said:—Having been appealed to in so distinct a manner by the hon. member, it is my duty to state what appears to me to be the rule and practice of the House upon questions of this nature. I have always understood the rule and practice of the House to be, that no member can regularly (subject to some qualification) vote on any question which involves in it an immediate interest of such member. This, I have said, is subject to some qualification. I will not detain the House by entering into the detail of that qualification at present. But when any measure is submitted to the House, the substance of which is to confer a pecuniary advantage, or diminish a loss, which is the same thing, I am satisfied it is not consistent with that mode of proceeding which the House has adopted on occasions of delicacy and importance, that any member should vote on a measure by which he intends to derive any benefit in case that measure should be carried into law.

Mr. *Manning* said he was much obliged to the Speaker for delivering so clear an opinion. He should decline voting upon this question.

The *Speaker*—I am extremely desirous of being distinctly understood by the House upon this important question. It does not appear to me to be possible for the House, under any existing rule or order, to preclude any member from voting. But I will state what appears to me to be the practice of the House as far as my researches have gone. The only precedent that I have been able to find analogous to this case, is to be met with in 1664; when a member voted in a question in which he was directly interested,

and his vote was disallowed afterwards on a division. If, therefore, any members vote upon a question which includes that species of interest in the opinion of the House, the House may afterwards disallow their votes. I must however add, that this applies to benefits which they expect and intend to derive. If members who may be entitled to benefit shall say they do not intend to derive any, it will be for the House to judge whether they will allow their votes.

Mr. *Windham* (Secretary at war) said, that he had no motive for offering a word upon the subject, but his sense of the great importance attending the point now started, and his wish to prevent the House from receiving a wrong impression from the rule they had heard from the chair; to which rule, and the authority it came from, he implicitly subscribed—but if taken in the extent to which gentlemen might wish to carry it, it would go to affect the character and constitution of the House; for few questions could arise in which some or many members would not be interested. He knew no law that members should not subscribe to a loan. And why, being members, should they be precluded from voting for that loan? The true distinction he conceived to be this: the rule applied only where the private interest was great, and the public interest small; but in this case the private interest was small, and the public great, and therefore he would vote for the motion. He was no subscriber; but if he were, that should not restrain him from voting. It was easy to see that this, like every other measure, was made use of to degrade and vilify the intentions of gentlemen who voted on his side, for endeavouring to support the constitution of the House, while those who did so were themselves giving every reason to believe, that they were anxious to destroy the House under the specious pretext of reform.

Mr. *Tierney* said, it was out of order to say that the member who made a motion for reform had it in view to destroy the House.

The *Speaker* said the right hon. gentleman had used no such expression.

Mr. *Windham* replied, that what he had said, and what he would avow, was, that the intention of many reformers was, to destroy the House, without meaning to allude to the hon. member (Mr. Grey) who brought forward the measure last

week, and against whom, on many accounts of a personal nature, and particularly on account of his absence, he would not utter such an insinuation.

The *Speaker* again rose and observed, that he had always, when appealed to, as in the present instance, given his opinion truly and sincerely, and never hazarded it lightly; but the right hon. gentleman had given a larger latitude to his opinion than what he had said warranted. The House would recollect he had stated there were qualifications. He would, however, repeat the rule,—“When a measure was to confer pecuniary advantage, or diminish pecuniary loss, no member who intended or expected to derive any benefit from it, could vote.” There were many cases where the benefit might be contingent or remote; but it was the business of the House to watch them with vigilant jealousy. The House would see the rule completely expressed, in a variety of ways perfectly familiar to them. If a member signed a petition, he could not himself present it. If a member was interested in a bill, he could not himself bring it in. These were the ordinary rules of the House, and from them they would deduce the rule that he had stated, and apply it as their wisdom should see fit. In 1664, the voice of a member interested was specially disallowed: and he had taken much pains to inform himself, had conversed with gentlemen, who, from their situation, were best qualified to give him information, and had attentively examined, and was convinced of the existence of the rule.

Mr. *Bastard* said, he had the most implicit reliance on the judgment and unbiassed integrity of the *Speaker*. No man living was so little likely to utter an opinion that was not sincere, and well-founded. This was the rule then, and if it had been known the preceding night, the resolution would not have passed, since there were only 14 majority, and the number of interested members were 14, so that the question was absolutely lost. All contractors, except contractors for loans, were excluded from the House; and if the present proposition were to be carried, it would be an irresistible argument for their exclusion also.

Mr. *Petrie* said, that by his subscription he would be entitled to 75*l.* bonus, but this would not in the smallest degree influence his vote. If, however, it was the opinion of the House that he ought not

to give one, he should bow to its decision.

Mr. *Jolliffe* said, that the House of Commons, instead of being unpopular, stood high in the confidence of the people; but to secure confidence, they ought not to adopt the measure proposed.

Mr. *Ryder* expressed the greatest respect for the opinion of the Speaker, but thought, if it was taken in the full latitude in which it was delivered, it would materially affect the votes of members in a great many particular instances in which, by the invariable practice of the House, they were now in the daily habit of voting. For instance, in all cases where a tax was to be laid on horses, dogs, coaches, and other articles, which members might be supposed to pay in a larger proportion than others, he thought, in strictness, the rule now laid down would operate so as to prevent a member from voting against any such tax. The same might be said with regard to voting for the repeal of a tax, towards which any member paid a very large proportion more than his neighbours.

The *Speaker* said, that the hon. member had certainly misconceived the rule as he had explained it. The cases put by the hon. member were all cases where the interest of members was merely eventual along with those of the rest of the community; the rule, as he had laid it down, according to the former decisions and practice of the House, related entirely to a direct and immediate interest, and he was clearly of opinion that members possessing such interest could not be allowed to vote where that interest interfered.

Mr. *Anstruther*, after professing the highest respect for the authority of the Chair, endeavoured to show, that the opinion delivered by the Speaker was not applicable to the vote of this evening.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that honourable gentlemen on the other side had complained of the refined construction of the question, but he assured them that the country would view it as a very plain one. One member was interested 3,500*l.* in the decision.

Lord *Hawkesbury* acquiesced in the Speaker's opinion, that those who had an interest and meant to preserve it, had no right to vote on this question. He should vote for the resolution.

Mr. *Sheridan* concurred in what the Speaker had spoken; but to bring the question to a point, he moved, "that the resolution be recommitted."

Mr. *Pitt* wished the division to take place on the resolution, and the votes of those interested to be disallowed if they did not disclaim that interest.

The question being put upon the resolution, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS { Lord Hawkesbury } 36
 { Mr. Anstruther }

NOES { Mr. Hussey } 35
 { Mr. Tierney }

So it was resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. Tierney stated, that he understood that those gentlemen who had not disclaimed their interest, were not entitled to vote. He saw an hon. gentleman opposite who had not expressed a determination not to derive any benefit from this measure; and therefore he moved "That the vote of George Rose, esq. be disallowed." Mr. Rose said, that he had determined not to take any advantage of the measure, and had expressed that determination to his friends near him. Mr. Tierney, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. W. Smith, Mr. Hussey, and lord W. Russell, contended, that the hon. member could not qualify himself to vote, by disclaiming his interest, after the division. Mr. Pitt, Mr. Dundas, Mr. Ryder, and Mr. Steele insisted, that all that was required by the order of the House was, that a gentleman should not possess an interest. The hon. member had formally disclaimed all intention of profiting by the measure, and therefore was qualified to give a vote. The Speaker was of opinion, that any member declaring his resolution not to profit by the bonus, had a right to give his vote, whether that determination was expressed before or after the division. The motion was negatived.

The King's Message respecting the Mutiny of the Seamen.] June 1. Mr. Secretary Dundas presented the following Message from his Majesty:

"GEORGE R.

"It is with the deepest concern, his majesty acquaints the House of Commons, that the conduct of the Crews of some of his Ships now at the Nore, in persisting in the most violent and treasonable acts of mutiny and disobedience, notwithstanding the full extension to them of all the benefits which had been accepted with gratitude by the rest of his majesty's fleet; and, notwithstanding the repeated offers of his majesty's gracious pardon, on their

returning to their duty, have compelled his majesty to call on all his faithful subjects to give their utmost assistance in repressing such dangerous and criminal proceedings. His majesty has directed a copy of the proclamation which he has issued for this purpose to be laid before the House; and he cannot doubt that his parliament will adopt, with readiness and decision, every measure which can tend, at this important conjuncture, to provide for the public security. And his majesty particularly recommends it to the consideration of parliament, to make more effectual provision for the prevention and punishment of all traitorous attempts to excite Sedition and Mutiny in his majesty's naval service; or to withdraw any part of his majesty's forces, by sea or land from their duty and allegiance to him; and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and the safety of the British empire.

G. R."

The said Message was ordered to be taken into consideration to-morrow. A similar message was presented to the Lords by lord Grenville.

Debate on the King's Message respecting the Mutiny of the Seamen.] June 2. The order of the day for taking his Majesty's Speech into consideration being read,

Mr. Pitt rose. He said, that important as the occasion was upon which he was now unfortunately compelled to trouble the House, he should not be under the necessity of detaining them long. By the communication which had been made from the throne, the House were informed that the favours which government had granted to the seamen, and which had been accepted by part of them with duty and gratitude, had not, in every instance, produced the desired effect, and that there were still the crews of some ships who persisted in acts of open mutiny; that they had continued in that state of mutiny although the measures which the legislature had taken in their behalf had been distinctly announced, and his majesty's pardon offered to them, upon condition of their returning to their duty. They had the mortification of knowing, that that mutiny had been carried to a most dangerous and unexampled excess, and that the mutineers had actually proceeded to acts of open hostility against part of his majesty's naval force, acting under re-

gular authority, and in obedience to orders. Much as they must deplore this unfortunate circumstance, at any time highly distressing, and more so at this moment, as tending to increase the public difficulties, yet he trusted the House would unanimously feel, that at such a moment, and under such circumstances, their first duty was to show to the world, that there was no public difficulty which they were not ready to meet with that firmness, with that courage, with that zeal for the public welfare, which alone could extricate the country from its present distress, and which alone was worthy the representatives of a great, a brave, and a free people. Impressed with these sentiments, he was convinced that they would not feel the slightest hesitation in carrying to the Throne the assurances of their unanimous determination of affording to his majesty every support in their power, to enable him to put an end to this resistance of regular authority, and to counteract the effects of so fatal an example. He trusted, that though they must all feel and lament the difficulty thus brought upon the country, they would, at the same time, feel a just indignation at the conduct of those crews, to whom he had alluded—a conduct, so inconsistent with the character of British seamen, and so ungrateful a return for the liberality of parliament, and the favour of the crown. But, in expressing these sentiments, at a conduct so repugnant to the past character of our sailors, who had established, on such a strong foundation, the glory of the British navy and the prosperity and security of the kingdom, he must be allowed to say, that it could not be in the hearts of British seamen that such sentiments had originated. If there were any enemies to the fundamental interests, and to the national honour of this country, who wished to weaken the supporters of our safety, by inciting them to measures, not more fatal to the public than to the navy itself; who had poisoned the minds, and perverted the principles of our sailors; if there were any internal enemies who united in interest with our foreign foes, however we might lament the effect of their wicked misrepresentations, still the indignation of the House and of parliament ought to be more strongly directed against the instigators than against these misguided and deluded men, who, for a time, and, he trusted, only for a time, had been seduced. He believed,

that the House would, in compliance with his majesty's message, unanimously and anxiously consider the present situation of the laws, as calculated to prevent or to punish any attempts of the nature to which he alluded, and which had been openly, and repeatedly, though unsuccessfully, made in another service. It was not necessary for him, in this stage of the business, to enter more particularly into those measures which he meant to propose; he thought it fair, however, to apprise the House, that if this address was, as he had no doubt it would be, immediately and unanimously agreed to, he should then move for leave to bring in a bill for the more effectual prevention of crimes of the nature to which he had alluded. There would be, he was sure, in that House, but one sense of the great guilt of this offence, the notoriety of its practice, and the danger of its consequences; in short, there existed every ground upon which penal law could be applied to any offence, namely, the mischief and the danger of the act itself, and the frequency of its commission. The remedy which he should propose for the consideration of parliament, would, he trusted, be sufficiently efficacious to attain its object without outstepping the moral guilt and real malignity of the crime. But while they were doing their duty by making every provision which wisdom and prudence could suggest for the public safety, he could not avoid expressing a firm persuasion, that, while parliament was not wanting to the country at such an important crisis, the public, collectively and individually, would not be found wanting to themselves. The present crisis was one which, though it ought not to excite despondency, must be felt to be sufficiently arduous to call forth the united and zealous exertions of all ranks of people. He trusted, that, as this appeared to be a period of unprecedented difficulty, it would also be found to be a period of unprecedented exertion—that every man who boasted the name of an Englishman, would stand forth, to maintain the authority of the laws, and enforce obedience to them; to oppose the machinations of the disaffected, and to preserve a due submission to legal authority. He felt that he should insult the honour of the House and the character of the nation, if he enlarged upon the subject. He should therefore move,

“That an humble Address be pre-

sented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House for his most gracious message:—To express to his majesty the concern and indignation which we must feel, in common with his majesty, at the heinous and criminal conduct of the crews of some of his majesty's ships, notwithstanding the offer so repeatedly made to them of his majesty's most gracious pardon, and the proofs of the paternal regard of his majesty, and of the liberality of parliament, which they have received in common with the rest of his majesty's fleet:—To assure his majesty, that we are ready and determined to afford to his majesty our utmost assistance in repressing such dangerous and criminal proceedings, and to adopt every measure which can tend, at this conjuncture, to provide for the public security: with this view we shall proceed, without delay, in pursuance of the recommendation of his majesty, to consider of such farther provision as it may be necessary to make for the more effectual prevention and punishment of all traitorous attempts to excite mutiny in any part of his majesty's forces, or to withdraw them from their duty and allegiance, and from that obedience and discipline which are so important to the prosperity and the safety of the British empire:—That we have the fullest reliance, that all his majesty's faithful subjects, from sentiments of loyalty and attachment to his majesty, and a just anxiety for their dearest interests, will be eager to manifest, at so important a crisis, a full determination to contribute, on every occasion, their utmost exertions for the support of legal authority, the maintenance of peace and order, and the general protection and defence of his majesty's kingdoms.”

Mr. *Jolliffe* said, that however cautious the House ought to be in extending the code of penal statutes, yet he thought it impossible but that the motion should pass unanimously; for, whatever sentiments persons might entertain with regard to different forms of government, or the merits or demerits of the individuals who were concerned in the administration of affairs, there could be but one opinion upon this point, that there must be discipline and subordination both in the army and navy; without which, it was impossible that the country could repel the attacks of foreign enemies, maintain internal peace, or, in short, that civil society could subsist. He trusted, there-

fore, that whatever objections the country might have to the component branches of administration; yet, when they saw the necessity of exertions against both foreign and domestic enemies, they would act with that spirit and unanimity which the exigency of circumstances required.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that no man in the House felt more than he did the propriety of the sentiments conveyed by the speech of the minister upon this occasion, and the propriety of the spirit of the address. He should endeavour so to conduct himself as to leave no room for any one to doubt the sincerity of his professions. But he deplored that species of eloquence which had been used in and out of that House, by which it was endeavoured to show that ministers were identified with the safety of the constitution of this country. However, he should concur in the present measure, at the same time holding himself free to express, either out of that House or in it, whatever appeared to him to be against administration, without impeaching the sincerity of what he was now doing.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, that whatever difference in political opinion might prevail among gentlemen in that House, they were now come to a time when his majesty had an undoubted right to call upon all his subjects, of every rank, class, and description, for their zealous co-operation in maintaining the due execution of the laws, and in giving every possible efficiency to the measures of government. However justly it might be contended, that there did exist strong grounds of reprehension and causes for future complaint against administration, yet such considerations were, in his opinion, at that moment completely out of the question, and the House was now called upon to unite most earnestly with his majesty against the fatal effects that might be produced by the perseverance in mutiny, and the dangerous disobedience of those ships mentioned in his majesty's message. He once intended to have submitted to the House a proposition, the efficacy of which appeared to his mind so powerful, that it would, if adopted, have prevented the present discussion. But such a measure was now become useless, and from the events which had since happened, improper to be applied as a remedy. He lamented that the proceedings of the lords commissioners of the Admiralty had not proved successful; but he was in-

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duced to believe, that the failure arose, in some degree, from the manner in which they were conducted. In a negotiation where you conciliate a little, and say you will conciliate no more, and then do grant more—when a board of admiralty is asked for and refused, and then a board of admiralty goes down; then there is nothing that can be conceded as a grace which will be received as one, and nothing held out as a menace which will operate and be received as a menace. It was his intention to have moved for the appointment of a commission, composed of men of all parties and descriptions, who might in their proceedings have been empowered to examine the claims of the seamen, to have acceded to those that appeared just and well-founded, and to have rejected those which were improper. Thus a commission, formed in the way he wished, would have come at once to a definitive conclusion, by expressly stating, "We have gone thus far in agreeing to your demands, and no farther will we make concession, which we conceive both dangerous and unjust." Though he sincerely deplored that the proposition had not been carried into execution, he was ready to admit that it was now become useless. The fatal perseverance in the mutiny, had placed the country in the situation described by the right hon. gentleman, and no person could feel more indignation against the foul incendiaries who had caused it, than himself. He was at first induced to think, that the mutineers had acted under the impulse of momentary delusion and mistake; but their subsequent and continued conduct convinced him, that something more than delusion operated on their minds, and that a rooted spirit of disobedience had taken place of those manly and loyal sentiments by which they had been on former occasions, constantly animated. If there was, indeed, a rot in the wooden walls of old England, our decay could not be very distant. The question, as it evidently appeared to his view, was not about this or that concession, but whether the country should be laid prostrate at the feet of France? It was, in fact, a matter of no moment, whether it was laid prostrate at the feet of monarchical or republican France, for still the event would be equally fatal, equally destructive. The national commerce would necessarily prove the great object of the enemy's vengeance, and those mistaken men, who might be instru-

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mental in producing so dreadful a crisis, would suffer most essentially in their dearest interests.—Having said thus much with respect to the first part of the address, he felt himself called on to declare, that he could not give his consent to the latter part of it; for he was convinced, unless the House would make a necessary distinction between giving their firm and decided support to the executive government against both foreign and domestic enemies, and between identifying the present ministers with the government of the country, nothing beneficial could be done for the public safety. He could not abstain from charging his majesty's ministers with having produced, by their weak and imprudent conduct, the calamities in which the nation was involved, although he perfectly agreed with them in expressing his indignation on the subject under discussion; and when he came to consider the manner in which the Treason and Sedition bills were announced, somewhat of an equal pledge with the present was pressed upon the House. He was consequently justified in expressing his reluctance to assent to that part of the address which respected the extension of the criminal code, on the same grounds as he objected to pledge himself to agree to the two bills which had passed. He should consider himself bound to look with a very jealous eye on any measure of the legislature, which went to increase the number of sanguinary penal laws. It was necessary, first, to inquire and ascertain, whether the present laws were deficient for the attainment of the ends proposed in the address; and he could not but recollect, with great regret, that an act somewhat similar in its nature to that proposed by the right hon. gentleman, had been passed in another country. If the bill went, therefore, to extend the sanguinary code of penal laws, without strong and sufficient grounds, he should consider himself warranted in withholding his assent to that part of the address. For that mode of legislation had been continually and systematically increased under the present administration; and what was to him a most important consideration, it had uniformly produced the very evil which it was intended to prevent. Was not the present mutiny a proof that the spirit of sedition had increased, notwithstanding the bills which had been introduced by ministers? They had also thought proper to adopt another remedy,

which was conceived to be effectual. They had established the system of barracks, on which millions of the public money had been expended, and the House was then told, that such a system would keep the soldiers out of the way of seduction, and prevent them from being exposed to the intrigues of the emissaries of faction. The House was also told, that if the people could not be made dumb, the soldiers should be made deaf. There was no proof whatever before the House to show that there was any deficiency in the existing laws to provide for the evil complained of; and until that proof was fairly made out, gentlemen could not, with any degree of consistency, pledge themselves to give their support to the bill. Knowing, from experience, that the moment the legislature should agree to increase the code of sanguinary penal laws, they would also agree to increase the evil intended to be remedied, he could not therefore give his assent to that part of the address. But as the right hon. gentleman wished for unanimity, he should not interrupt it, and would therefore decline giving any vote at all.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, he agreed with the hon. gentleman in a great part of what had been stated by him. The country was highly indebted to him for his fair and manly conduct. There appeared to him, however, an error in one of the observations of the hon. gentleman. He seemed to suppose, that the lords of the Admiralty, after having refused to make any farther concessions, had gone down to Sheerness for the purpose of the negotiation. That they did originally refuse to go, was true; that they did go afterwards was also true; but the circumstances were such, that they would have been culpable if they had gone in the first instance, and equally culpable if they had not gone in the second. They were called upon to go down and redress grievances; but it was afterwards said, that in the existing state of affairs, if the Admiralty would go to Sheerness, not with a view to redress grievances, but to make a declaration that they would not yield to any demands made subsequent to the sailing of lord Bridport's fleet, such a declaration, if made, declining all negotiation, would in all probability be attended with the effect of putting an end to the belief that, by holding out, the sailors could obtain farther concessions. The Admiralty did not make concessions; they declared that

they would not enter into negotiation, but that they were ready to grant pardon, and to put the sailors on the same footing as those of lord Bridport's fleet. Such were the real circumstances of the proceedings of the lords of the Admiralty. With respect to the concluding part of the address, the hon. gentleman did not surely mean to say that cases might not occur when the legislature ought to interfere, for the purpose of enforcing or extending the existing laws, when the object in view was the prevention of measures which went to the subversion of all military obedience, and endangered the existence of the country! But, in fact, there was nothing in the address that related to the bill intended to be brought forward. He would therefore appeal to the hon. gentleman, whether his own avowed principles were not in the closest union with the latter part of the address.

Mr. *Baker* thought that Mr. *Sheridan* had let fall some expressions which might have a disagreeable effect. The hon. gentleman had certainly a right to introduce the subject of barracks, but the allusion to the present discussion was not exactly just. It was sincerely to be wished, that in noticing the measures of government, he had not pointedly made the supposition, that the soldiers were shut up to avoid contracting the sentiments of anarchy which were now prevalent. Of the loyalty of the soldiers, no doubt could be entertained; and notwithstanding the mutinous conduct of some of the seamen, the generality of that gallant body were animated with the most genuine sentiments of loyalty.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—No man can feel a stronger sense than myself of the criminality of the proceedings of the seamen, or more reprobate the machinations (if proved) of those evil minded persons who have excited them to the commission of such outrages. But upon the face of this address a fact is implied, of which I am not satisfied. When we assure his majesty that we are ready so adopt "farther provisions" for the punishment of those who seduce his forces from their obedience to the laws, do we not admit the existing laws to be inadequate to the suppression of the guilty practice? But I will not, on account of this objection, abstain from giving my vote for this address; and if the right hon. gentleman can convince me that the mutiny at the Nore is owing to the wicked arts of internal ene-

mies, that the existing laws are not sufficient to prevent such seduction, and that the bill he proposes to introduce will answer the purpose better, I shall give him my hearty support. An hon. gentleman assures us, that the heart of the navy is sound, a few ships only being in a state of mutiny. I am not without my fears that this intelligence is ill founded. God grant that I may be mistaken, and that we may soon hear of the entire restoration of order and discipline.

The Address was agreed to *nem. con.* A similar address was also agreed to by the Lords.

Debate in the Commons on the Bill for preventing the Seduction of Sailors and Soldiers.] Mr. *Pitt* rose again, to move for leave to bring in a bill for the better prevention and punishment of attempts to seduce persons, serving in his majesty's forces by sea or land, from their duty and allegiance to his majesty, or to incite them to mutiny or disobedience of orders. He had already stated, he observed, that if any person required substantial evidence of any individual mal-practices to excite sedition and mutiny in his majesty's service, it was not at present in his power to produce it; but he trusted it would be enough to satisfy the House of the necessity for the bill, if the frequency of seditious practices were notorious. From his official situation, it had fallen to his lot to become acquainted with various circumstances, which, from the events which had taken place, demonstrated the operation of the causes to which he alluded. Every gentleman must have seen, from his own observation and experience, enough to furnish a conviction of the existence of the attempts which they were desirous to prevent. Gentlemen must have seen, by emissaries being at work at secret hours, by the hand-bills which had been industriously dispersed in every part where they were likely to attract the attention of the soldiers, that the engines of sedition had been no less busy on shore, where, to the honour of the soldiery, he had the happiness to say, they had failed in their effects, than in the navy, where they had unfortunately been successful. Gentlemen needed only to connect the discontents on board the fleet with the other species of sedition upon shore, to pronounce them to be part of a fatal and deep digested system; for that they were not the effects of accident, was demon-

strated by the conformity of the transactions at Newcastle, Nottingham, Maidstone, Canterbury, Salisbury, and many other places, where the same species of hand-bills, had been scattered about, accompanied by rumours of the most false and scandalous nature, and where, in some unhappy instances, a few deluded or ill-disposed people had set the same melancholy example. A more studied system could not offer itself to the thoughts of any man; a more practicable plan of treason to provoke a general rebellion could not be attempted to be put in execution. From such specimens, therefore, it was evident that the sedition was systematic, and that precaution was requisite. He would put it, then, to the decision of every man whether the laws in being were sufficient to deter men from the prosecution of their evil purposes? That they had not deterred them, was plain, from the mutinous proceeding still existing; and this very circumstance was a reasonable presumption that the laws in force were not sufficient. Had the statute law ever endeavoured to search out every possible offence, and provide for its prevention and punishment? Certainly not. The statute laws of this country were not the result of a systematic code; they had grown up to what they were by an accumulation of provisions made to suit offences as they occurred. Would it then be contended, that because no particular law had been hitherto provided by the legislature for this or any other individual case, none should ever be provided? To meet this most dangerous and atrocious crime there was no adequate provision at present in our Statute books. He put it to the House, whether they would be content to let it rest so? Whether they would leave to be comprehended under the head of a common misdemeanor, a crime which exceeded the bounds of ordinary treason? Formerly to entice any of his majesty's forces to desert from his service was only a common misdemeanor: but soon after the present family came to the throne of these dominions, that law was revised and altered, and any person found guilty of that offence, incurred an additional penalty. Would any man pretend to say, then, that a person found guilty of enticing his majesty's forces to desert, should incur a heavy penalty, and that they who enticed his forces to employ their arms in breach of their allegiance, should go unpunished? Indisputably not. And for

that reason he had endeavoured to provide a remedy. He regretted that the offences were so secret and so complex in their nature, that it was impossible at present to define them, and under those circumstances, he could not propose any measure so definite as he wished. In point of moral guilt, the persons who had been so active in seducing the forces from their allegiance, were the worst traitors to society, and deserved the most exemplary punishment; but on the other hand, as the precise nature and extent could not be determined, he thought the medium would be the best and most effectual way of proceeding against them. What he had to propose then was, to treat any attempt to excite sedition and mutiny in his majesty's service, or to withdraw any part of his majesty's forces by sea or land from their duty and allegiance, as an aggravated species of misdemeanor, leaving to the discretion of the Court the power of inflicting, not only the penalties of fine and imprisonment, as in other cases of misdemeanor, but as circumstances might require, the penalties of banishment and transportation also. If they looked for a guide to their own just indignation, this punishment would be short of the offence; but he wished to guard them against that, as the offence, however heinous, was by no means of a definite nature, and he would rather try it in this shape than push it farther. The House, he believed, would think he had not proposed too much, and he hoped that he had not proposed too little. He therefore moved for leave to bring in the bill.

Mr. *Jolliffe* agreed in opinion as to the atrocity of the crime, and thought if the punishment were greater than in ordinary cases of treason, it would not be too much; but he objected to leaving the power of transportation to the discretion of the judges. He thought the whole of the punishment should be known, and left for the discretion of the jury.

Mr. *Brandling* approved of the measure, and suggested whether it would not be politic to provide rewards for the discovery of the offenders.

Mr. Serjeant *Adair* said, he never rose with more anxiety than he did that evening, when it became his duty to join in the provision of restrictive measures against the most atrocious acts that ever were committed. The disgraceful proceedings which had characterised the two last weeks had produced but one senti-

ment in the minds of every well affected person. No one could for a moment doubt that such novel and pernicious proceedings had been concerted by persons inimical to the safety and happiness of the country; nor could any one doubt that such proceedings called at least for temporary measures of exertion. So far he could not too much commend the right hon. gentleman for his endeavours to destroy this dangerous sedition; but when he came to consider, that penalties were to be in force against offences which were pronounced to be indefinite, he felt himself obliged to refuse his entire approbation. This he did, because the penalties, in his opinion appeared to be inadequate to the enormity of the offence. He thought no punishment could be adequate to the offence which the bill described. The offence was equal to the worst description of treason, and deserved the severest punishment. But as the offence involved a variety of circumstances, perhaps one of the reasons which deterred the right hon. mover from fixing the penalty at a higher rate, was the one that prevented him from giving the offence a definite description. He thought that by nominating the crime a misdemeanor only, they were likely to produce a difficulty and delay in the punishment of the delinquents that would be very imprudent, both on the score of policy and justice, and inconsistent with the pressure of such dangerous proceedings; for it was in the power of any offender in a misdemeanor to delay trial; and if the crime of exciting the forces to rebellion were brought home to any one, God forbid that he should have it in his power to delay justice. However unwilling he might be to multiply the penalties of death—and he believed, according to our criminal code, that penalty was too often inflicted—yet for the offence now described, not only death should be incurred, but death in more than usual horror; for scarcely any punishment could be too severe for such a crime. That the trial might be as speedy as possible, he wished to make the offence felony, because he wished to make it as definite as it conveniently could be. How long a law of this nature ought to exist after the House had been induced to adopt it, he left to their decision; but it ought by no means to be permanent. He cautioned the House to be careful, and hoped they would not produce any permanent alterations in the constitution.

Mr. *Pitt* agreed that the measure should be only temporary. Feeling the extraordinary pressure of the circumstances, he had merely brought forward a measure, which in his opinion was adequate to the end proposed, subject to the approbation of the House: and, therefore, whether the bill was in its altered state to be one of those extraordinary measures recommended by the learned gentleman or the one proposed by himself would be determined by the House. He doubted whether an increase of punishment was likely to be attended with the success the learned gentleman seemed to expect. He admitted that it would carry with it more terror, but whether the execution of it would be more effective he doubted. It was difficult to attach such a penalty, unless a more definite description could be given of the offence; and he thought, by adopting the learned serjeant's measure, instead of gaining practically, it would be involving the offence in technical intricacies. It was on this ground he had proposed a penalty far beneath his own view of the nature of the crime.

Mr. *Spencer Perceval* suggested, that a mean might be adopted between the propositions of the chancellor of the exchequer and that of his hon. friend. He thought it would be better if the offence was denominated felony, but within the benefit of clergy, and that there should be a discretionary power either of transportation or imprisonment, or, if necessary, of death. It would have the effect of avoiding the delay incident to trials for misdemeanors.

The *Master of the Rolls* said, there was no difference, between making the offence, felony, with benefit of clergy, and an aggravated misdemeanor, except that the party was allowed counsel in the one case, and not in the other.

Leave was given, and the bill was brought in, and read a first and second time.

June 3. On the order of the day for going into a committee on the bill,

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—I agree, Sir, in the principle stated by the chancellor of the exchequer, namely, that in showing the necessity of a remedial statute it is not necessary to produce such a full measure of legal proof as is required to convict an individual in a court of justice. If circumstances be so notorious that no reasonable man can withhold his belief, it is enough.

Who can hesitate to pronounce that the sailors are only misguided and deluded and that they have been led to commit such lamentable excesses, in consequence of the machinations of a set of men, who, wishing to subvert the constitution, would taint the national strength, and turn into the bowels of their native country the sword intended for its defence? Every gentleman must know that seditious hand-bills have been thrown into the boxes of the sentinels in this metropolis, and that attempts have been made to poison the minds of the soldiery in many of the great cities of the kingdom. That the discontents of the seamen should break out precisely at the same point of time is a strong presumption that their origin is to be attributed to the same malignant authors. Another fair ground of presumption may be derived from the known character of the seamen, a frank and generous race, incapable of forming any deliberate plan of treachery. Are there not internal proofs, that the statement of their grievances presented to the Admiralty is the composition of almost any person rather than a seaman? The clumsy endeavour to introduce a great number of sea-terms, some of which are so inaccurate, that they never could have been dictated by any mariner, evidently betrays the pen of a landsman and an impostor. From these considerations I feel myself warranted to conclude, that there is in this country a body of men who have conspired to overturn the constitution by seducing the sea and land forces from their attachment to their king and country.—The right hon. gentleman asserted last night, that because persons had not been deterred from exciting insurrection in the fleet and army, the existing laws might therefore justly be supposed incapable of repressing such flagitious conduct. But this surely is very illogical reasoning. If offences be committed, and the laws against them put in force without restraining the practice, then it may be said that the laws in being are totally inadequate to the purpose, for which they were framed: but, until you have carried them into execution, you cannot say whether, they be efficacious or not. Upon what footing does the law stand at present? The crime of seducing his majesty's land or sea forces from their allegiance is only punishable by common law; but the person who is convicted of it may be imprisoned for six years, and during that pe-

riod be twice set in the pillory. Is this a slight punishment? Ought we not to try the effect of it before we have recourse to greater severity? Permit me to quote an expression used by some French author, "*Une loi rigoureuse produit des crimes.*" Nothing can be more true than this observation. Juries become slow to convict, hopes of impunity increase the number of offenders, and thus the nation grows every day more and more wicked. By the effect, then, which cruel punishments produce upon the morals of a people; by the veneration with which the code of jurisprudence and the legislature of the country ought to be regarded; by the uniform series of examples in the page of history, all of which make it appear that those periods, during which sanguinary laws prevailed, have ever been most unfavourable to liberty; by these united considerations, let me implore the House to consider well before they adopt measures of extraordinary harshness. For my own part, until by fair experiment I am satisfied of the inefficacy of the present laws, I cannot give my consent to this bill, or any other of the same kind.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, he found nothing in the present measure calculated to facilitate discovery. If it could be shown that sedition and mutiny were going on rapidly, and that the terror of the punishment to be inflicted would deter men from committing such crimes, then, indeed, the bill ought to receive the unanimous support of the House. But, if the present punishment of six years imprisonment would not deter them, would the punishment of transportation? If the offence were to be made felony, there would be this inconvenience: in times of heat much odium attached to persons accused; and therefore it would be of advantage to such persons to have their trials delayed, until the heat had subsided. It was possible, in the present moment, that persons might be entrapped and snared; and, therefore, to inflict the punishment of transportation for seven years, for words spoken possibly in heat, was what the House ought not to agree to without much consideration.

The House having resolved itself into the committee,

Mr. *Pitt* said, that as some objection had been made both with respect to the want of a clear definition of the nature of the crime against which it was intended the bill should provide, and to the discre-

tionary power of inflicting the punishment, he should trouble the committee with a few words. It had been urged, that some penalty more adapted to the malignity of the offence, ought to be provided. But the House, he thought, should not proceed to impose such a penalty, without carefully drawing a distinction between the present and every inferior offence. He was convinced, that the most constitutional way of proceeding would be to make such a description of the offence as might appear most consistent with the laws of the Statute book, and to affix to it the severe punishment proposed by his learned friend. An act of mutiny was punished with death by the articles of war. To endeavour to make any mutinous assembly, was also punished with death. It could not, certainly, be thought too severe to make those persons who were guilty of seduction, those who were the movers and instigators of sedition and mutiny, liable to the same punishment with the persons who, being the unhappy instruments of their machinations, committed the act of mutiny subsequent to the seduction. He thought it advisable, that the legislature should show that caution which it was bound to exercise in penal proceedings. On that ground he should propose a limitation to the operation of the bill. He concluded by moving to leave out the words, "or to incite and stir up any such persons from their duty and allegiance," and to insert the words, "maliciously and advisedly to commit any act of mutiny or treason, or to make or endeavour to make any mutinous or traitorous assemblies, or to commit any mutinous or traitorous acts whatever."—The motion was agreed to. He also brought up a clause, which was adopted, for limiting the duration of the act to one month after the commencement of the next session of parliament.

The House being resumed, the report was agreed to. After which, the bill went through its remaining stages without opposition, and was passed.

Debate in the Commons on the Bill for Restraining Intercourse with the Ships in Mutiny.] Mr. Pitt then said, that at a moment when a number of ships were in a state of mutiny, unprovoked by any cause, and persisted in without the colour of reason; when the crews of these ships were presumptuously harassing the peaceable commerce of the country, and intercepting the trade of the port of

London; when they had even proceeded to acts of open rebellion, he thought it wise in the legislature to empower the executive government to preclude them from holding any intercourse with those shores which they had so grossly insulted, and whose safety they were so imminently endangering. It was the duty of the legislature, however, while they adopted every measure to facilitate the discovery, to expedite the trial, and to secure the punishment of the instigators of the mutiny, and to repress the mutiny itself, to leave a door of reconciliation open to those who were the objects of seduction, and who, by returning to their duty in time, might be restored to the favour of their justly-offended country. He should propose, therefore, that a bill should be passed, making any person or persons, after a certain proclamation being issued and read in the dock-yards, guilty of felony who shall hold any intercourse with the ships then in a state of mutiny, and to deprive those sailors, who, after the date of that proclamation, shall not return to their duty, of all arrears of pay and allowances, and from all benefit from Greenwich hospital, and the chest of Chatham. He should therefore move, "That leave be given to bring in a bill for more effectually restraining intercourse with the Crews of certain of his Majesty's Ships now in a state of Mutiny and Rebellion, and for the more effectual Suppression of such Mutiny and Rebellion."

Leave was given, and the bill was brought in, and read a first and second time.

June 5. The order of the day for going into a committee on the bill being read,

Sir John Sinclair regretted the disunion of sentiments which had deprived the House of the assistance of some members better qualified than himself to examine the merits of this bill, and being doubtful whether they could abandon their places upon the reasons they had given, in times of such public exigency and distress, he had been induced to search for some precedent in the parliamentary annals of this kingdom, and he found, that in the reign of William and Mary, a secession of certain representatives had taken place upon the ground of—[Here there was a cry of Chair, chair! and the Speaker intimated that this sort of digression was irregular.] The hon. baronet

proceeded. He said, he thought the coercive measures proposed to be adopted, were of the most dangerous nature. By passing such a bill the House might be said to pass the Rubicon. The right hon. gentleman, by recommending such rigorous proceedings, had not only drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard, but he had also pushed his punishments so far, that it appeared doubtful whether he would not expatriate the British navy. It was his wish to unite terror and conciliation, and for that purpose, he conceived it would be right to have commissioners appointed, invested with power to suspend the acts whenever the crews in a state of mutiny should return to their duty.

Mr. *Pitt* hoped the House would do him the justice to recollect, that in opening the measure to the House he had stated, that it would contain some provision to the effect which the worthy baronet had suggested. But while the seamen continued in acts of mutiny and rebellion, could it be doubted for a moment that they ought to be cut off from all regular intercourse with that country whose cause they had deserted, whose dignity they had insulted, and whose interests they had attacked? If the observation that the Rubicon was passed, applied to the present case, it was to those who had been guilty of open violation to the laws, and hostile attacks upon the very existence of the country, not to the legislature that was about to enact provisions to subdue rebellion. It was intended to authorize the lords commissioners of the admiralty, or any three of them, to accept the submission of the crews of any of his majesty's ships, or any part thereof, or any individuals, to declare them no longer in a state of mutiny, and to exempt them from the pains and penalties of this bill.

The House having resolved itself into the committee, the Solicitor General proposed to fill up the blanks in the penal clause with these words, "shall be adjudged guilty of felony, and shall suffer death as in cases of felony, without benefit of clergy."

Mr. *Nicholls* said, he was staggered by the clause which blended the acts of communication and intercourse with the acts of aiding and abetting treason. He did not think intercourse with a person guilty of high treason was even a misdemeanor, provided it was not accompanied by overt acts of aiding and abetting. A communication might take place from shore with-

out any motive of sedition. He thought, therefore, that to make communication a misdemeanor, would be sufficient, and that the heaviest imposition the parties should suffer in such cases should be the usual penalties of misdemeanor, being farther liable, if the court should think it proper, to transportation.

Mr. Serjeant *Adair* said, he would concur in that opinion, if the penalty could attach on an innocent person before the declaration of this law; but the bill distinctly stated, that the penalties would not attach to any communication but those which should be wilfully and advisedly made after declaration. So far was this bill from increasing penalties, that there were many acts not only of felony but high treason, which this bill excepted. It was not easy to conceive any species of intercourse after the declaration, without his majesty's permission, which would be innocent; and yet the provisions of the bill were so temporary in their nature, that the penalties not only expired with the limited duration of the bill, but ceased the moment the crews were declared to be no longer in a state of rebellion.

The *Attorney General* said, that in preparing the bill he had acted upon those principles which prudently and wholesomely applied, had again and again saved the country. The circumstances which had unfortunately given rise to the bill constituted aggravated treason, piracy, and rebellion. The hon. baronet, if he blamed the policy of this law, must go farther, and unmake half the law of the country, for the law of the country made all principals who were found aiding and abetting in such cases, while this gave the people liable to incur those penalties a humane notification. Such was the real character of the act, that it not only did this, but tended to rescue some of the greatest ornaments and supports of the country from the perilous situation in which a gang of conspirators had placed them; and he hoped it would avail. He was reduced to express the law in general terms; for though he was ready to admit a letter might be innocent, it might be criminal also. The principle of the bill was not new; for England, such as it is, existed upon it. If it were true, that the present mutiny was not the genuine and spontaneous act of the seamen, could any man think the conspirators who provoked them to begin it would not find some

means of urging them to continue it, unless the provisos of the bill were general? The bill, then, would attain its object, for it would intercept all communication; and as to any objections to its severity, he repeated, that it acted upon the principle of the English laws; and it never was the character of this country to extend the laws beyond the ends of justice.

Mr. *Nicholls* thought that the communications liable to the penalty should be made more explicit.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that communications by letters or otherwise, which might have been previously innocent, might yet come under the application of the penalty after due notification had been given. Much evil might arise from permitting communication to take place: nor did he see that any good could be done by such as was carried on without permission. But there were other reasons for which he thought that all intercourse should be cut off. He was anxious that it should be prevented in every shape. The men who had been guilty of acts of such aggravated rebellion and treason ought to be completely separated from that country whose cause they had abandoned. If they valued the communication and intercourse with a father, a brother, or a wife, before they could enjoy the sweets of those endearing relations, they must reconcile themselves to their offended country. If we could obtain new avenues to their hearts: if we could employ additional motives to rouse the generous feelings of those brave, but deluded men; if, by awakening the tender affections of the human heart, we could recall them to a sense of the duty they owed to that country by which the various ties of nature were cherished and protected, we gained a great deal for that object which we were so desirous to attain; and as far as the measure was calculated to produce that effect, it promised more fairly for ultimate success.

Mr. *Jeffreys* said, that strong measures were necessary. He did not know if this measure would accomplish the desired object. He should not oppose it, however. He was no advocate for those who had acted in a manner so unworthy of British seamen.

The blank was filled up as originally proposed.

The *Solicitor General* proposed that those who voluntarily continued in a state of mutiny and rebellion after the above

publication, should forfeit all the wages due to them, and all the advantages to which they would otherwise have been entitled.

Mr. *M. A. Taylor* felt much for the many unfortunate men who were confined on board the ships at the Nore against their own will, and who were operated upon by the fear as well as the artifices of others. He knew, however, that juries would consider those circumstances when their guilt or innocence were in question. Many gallant officers might also be in danger from the seamen; yet, though these circumstances rendered his vote a reluctant one, he would not withhold it. He prayed to God that the measure might be successful; but he had his doubts of its efficacy.

Mr. *Jeffreys* said, that strong measures were necessary. Those now before the House were of that nature. That they might prove beneficial, he most fervently hoped. They had his decided support.

On the motion for the report of the committee,

Sir *Francis Burdett* said, that this bill was altogether repugnant to his feelings; and therefore he should give his voice against it. We had but the bare assertion of ministers, that such a measure was necessary; nothing but their assertion that there have been any insurgents among the seamen; and a law of this nature should never pass on bare assertion. But that was not the chief cause of his opposing the bill. He opposed it upon a principle of a much broader nature. It was, because he thought that the bill might be productive of mischief, by rendering any accommodation between the seamen and their country impracticable. It tended to place the seamen in a state of desperation; and the mischief which they might do to the country in that state was dreadful. The discontent was not confined to the seamen; there was much of it in other quarters, and was visible in many parts of the country. The very strong laws that were made to repress these discontents, or rather the expression of them, were symptoms of great disease, for which there was a cause of a very different kind from that which was stated. That cause of the misconduct of administration for a long time, but particularly for the last four years, and the enormous corruption of the executive government. These were the real causes of the evil; all other causes were fictitious. If, therefore,

it was our object to remove the effect of the evil, we must remove the cause. The only way to remedy the evil was, to petition the king to dismiss his present ministers, and to pursue such measures as might put an end to our present shameful corruption; not by increasing penal laws, for they would only inflame those who were already irritated; and would increase instead of diminishing the evil. Had he been in the House, he should have opposed the other bill which had just passed.

On the question for the third reading,

Mr. *Sturt* objected to the bill, from a belief that it would not answer the purpose which ministers had in view. He, in his conscience believed, that nothing but conciliatory measures would be useful in this case. He attributed the conduct of the sailors at Spithead, when the discontent first appeared, to the tyrannical measures which ministers had adopted in Ireland. We all knew that deserving and innocent men were driven into exile by the contemptible government of that kingdom. They were forced to go on board ships, although they had never before been to sea. For this they naturally felt resentment. It was natural enough for them to instil discontent into the minds of the seamen, and they had gone farther than they intended. Nothing upon earth would restore harmony and confidence in the fleet or elsewhere, but the repeal of those tyrannical and diabolical bills, the sedition—

The *Speaker* called to order. The bills which were alluded to constituted a part of the laws of the country, and he could not suffer any of them to be spoken of in that manner.

Mr. *Sturt* said, the country would one day or other see the impropriety of them. He opposed this bill, because the law now in force was fully adequate to the correction of the evil. Out of thirty-six articles of war, seventeen were absolutely penal. He saw no reason for adding to their force.

Mr. *Baker* said, that the hon. gentleman might have given, perhaps, more information to the House; he best knew what communications had been made to him, and from what persons. It was a little extraordinary that such observations should have come from a gentleman who had himself once had a naval character, and might perhaps now have a commission. It was much fitter, on every principle of duty as a member of that House,

much more agreeable to the allegiance he had subscribed, much more consonant to the character of the service to which he belonged, to have taken a different line of conduct, than by exertions of an inflammatory nature to encourage these men in their mutinous inclinations. He was sorry to be compelled to make such observations. Whether he felt it or not, the hon. gentleman had said that which ought not to escape unnoticed. It was language unbecoming any subject, and much more a gentleman of his character.

Mr. *Sturt* said, he was not afraid of repeating what he had said. The hon. gentleman had insinuated in the House what he would not dare to insinuate out of it. He, as a member of the British legislature, had a right to give his opinion without being subject to such unjustifiable insinuations. He would not have it go forth that he was leagued with any but such as were friends to their country. He did not like this bill, because it treated the sailors as rebels, whereas we ought to try the effect of conciliatory measures. He knew the nature of British seamen; he had had the honour of being in the service. No men more dearly loved their country than the seamen did. No longer ago than the preceding day they had honoured the monarchy of Great Britain by a display of the royal flag and the firing of cannon on the king's birth-day. He warned the House of the hazard of firing a single shot at the sailors. He should take the sense of the House upon the bill.

The House accordingly divided:

Tellers.

YEAS { Mr. Attorney General - }
 { Mr. Baker - - - - - }

Mr. *Sturt* was appointed one of the tellers for the Noes; but no other member remaining in the House to be a second teller for the Noes, the Yeas returned into the House; and Mr. *Speaker* declared the Yeas had it. The bill was then passed *nem. con.*

Debate in the Commons on the Bill for preventing the Forestalling, &c. of Live Cattle.] June 13. The order of the day for the House to go into a committee on the bill to prevent the Forestalling Regrattling and Engrossing of Live Cattle, being read,

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, that the principle of the bill was one to which he could not assent. The ancient laws of this country

had been very severe against every species of forestalling; but, when men became more enlightened, the impolicy of them was discovered, and, by a law passed in 1772, they were all repealed. Now, however, the cutting retail butchers had wisely discovered, that this repeal was erroneous, and that the ancient severity of the laws should be brought back. There were very good reasons for the rise of butchers' meat without imputing it to the cause assigned in the bill. There had been several unproductive harvests successively, which necessarily decreased the number of hogs, forced people who used to live upon pork, to use other kinds of butchers' meat. The stoppage of distilleries, too, aided this cause. The laws as they now stood had existed 18 years, without inconvenience; for in the evidence collected by the committee, it was said that the rise began to be felt within these seven years. The jobbers, as they were called, or the middle men, were said to be the cause of this, in going to the country, and buying up from the farmer and grazier. In his opinion the jobber was of advantage. By trading to a large extent he was able to do with a small profit, and bring the cattle to market cheaper than the farmer could do. If the business of a jobber furnished such large profits, it would soon be overstocked, and find its own level. The jobber might sometimes buy cheap and sell dear; but it likewise often happened the other way; at one time they gained, at another they lost. It was enacted by this bill, that no man should sell again till he had kept the cattle fourteen days in his possession. But was it not evident, that this could only be done by the rich grazier who could bear the expense, to the prejudice of the other dealers, and of the public. He was of opinion that the market should be left perfectly free to find its own level, that any legal regulation would defeat the object proposed, and that, therefore, the bill ought to be thrown out.

Mr. Alderman *Combe* agreed in the general principles stated by the worthy baronet. In practice it had been found, however, that deviations from it were necessary. This was one of the cases where it was called for. The legislature had limited it in several instances. Money, bread, and various other articles were fixed at a maximum, and he thought the regulation proposed by the bill would be very useful.

Mr. *Bryan Edwards* agreed with the worthy baronet. Dr. Adam Smith, upon the very subject of forestalling, reprobated all legal interference, and ridiculed the alarms entertained of the market being worse served without them as a vulgar error, no better founded than the common notions about witches. All commodities, especially perishable ones, would find their own level. The jobber met the farmer or grazier half way, and took the cattle off his hand. The worthy baronet had pointed out some of the leading causes of the rise in the price of butchers' meat. The one stated in the bill certainly was not the cause. To adopt the measure would be to increase the discontents of the people, by holding out a class of men as causing a scarcity and high price, when in fact they were not to blame.

Mr. *Bastard* said, the jobber was of no advantage in bringing the cattle to market, for he brought them in the same manner the farmer would have done. At present it was not a competition but a monopoly. The jobber sometimes offered to the farmer a higher price than he was willing to take, in order to keep up the market. He thought, therefore, some regulation necessary.

Mr. *Tierney* said, it was to allay discontent that he should support the bill. Would the House hold out to the people the idea that they would not inquire into their grievances—that they would not deliberate upon the means to remove them? He thought the conduct of the cutting butchers highly commendable. They had no interest in the matter, for whether they bought cheap or dear they had the same profit on a pound of meat. They had brought the subject before the House, without pointing out any particular persons, and deserved the thanks of the country.

Mr. *Mainwaring* said, that the wish of those who supported the bill was, to prevent the enhancement of the price of meat. There had been much jobbing of late years; and he could not conceive how it could tend to lower the price of provisions, that there should be two or three intermediate persons betwixt the men who sent meat to market and those who consumed it. If, as was established, cattle were sold five or six times, must not this raise the price to the consumer? Forestalling had risen to such an excess, that not one half of the cattle brought to Smithfield were sold in open market. The

jobbers always took care to keep the market understocked, to keep it at their own price. The jobber was of no advantage to the supply of the market, for the cattle were driven up for the jobber by the same men who brought them up for the farmer. It surely was an evil when the supply got into few hands. Competition, instead of being promoted, was totally overthrown. He respected the authority of Dr. Smith, but he considered experience and facts to be better guides than theory; he thought the doctor's authority was for the bill, because it went to establish and secure competition, and to banish monopoly. It was the opinion of men well conversant with the subject, that the bill would materially serve to reduce the price of provisions.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, he had as high a regard for Dr. Smith as any man, but it was not doing his general principle justice to contend for an individual application when the general circumstances of the metropolis were in opposition to that principle. He was convinced that the evil did exist, and that a remedy should be applied.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Mainwaring - -	}	31
		Mr. Alderman Combe -		
NOES	{	Sir William Pulteney -	}	11
		Mr. Bryan Edwards -		

So it was resolved in the affirmative. The bill was committed on the 22nd.

June 29. The House proceeded to take the report of the committee into consideration. The question being put, "That the amendments made by the committee be now read a second time,"

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, that his objections to the bill were founded upon general principles. All the ideas which had given rise to the old acts of parliament on this subject were now exploded. Men had become sufficiently enlightened to discover, that legal regulations in cases of this nature, defeated the object which they were intended to promote. It was not in human wisdom to enact regulations upon this subject. Men's own interest was the best rule by which trade was to be conducted. It was the interest of the one to buy as cheap, and the other to sell as dear as he could, and the competition to which this mutually gave rise ensured the public advantage. A free trade would

find its own level, and always ensure a proper supply. A foreigner had expressed great surprise how, without any regulations, the market of London could be supplied with provisions, and he was answered by an intelligent person, that it was because there was no regulation that the supply was so good; and this was the fact. The question, then, merely came to this—Whether the House would allow the interest of individuals so to operate as ultimately to produce a regular and reasonable supply, or by injudicious, though well-meant, regulations, overthrow the principles upon which the supply depended? The jobber, who was so much the object of obloquy, was, in reality, the same as the drover. If the drover were to have the exclusive privilege of bringing up cattle to Smithfield, what virtue was there in him to prevent him from falling into the same vices, if they were vices, which were imputed to the jobber? Might not the salesman, with the monopoly conferred on him, do that which was now imputed to the jobber, and from which the high prices were said to arise? He was averse to the bill, however, on the broad principle, that a free trade would best answer the purpose proposed, and that all regulations were pernicious. He was convinced the bill was well intended; but as he saw the evils which it was likely to occasion, he would move to leave out the word "now," and to add the words "upon this day three months."

Mr. *Tierney* said, he did not like the mode of reasoning employed, nor did he know what pretension there was to new lights on the subject. The House had come to a resolution in 1764, that the high price of provisions was owing to the laxness of the laws against forestalling. In 1767 this resolution was contradicted by one directly opposite. In 1770 all the laws against forestalling had been repealed; twenty-five years experience intervened, and the price of meat had been found to increase. A committee last year had decidedly pronounced the high price of provisions to be owing to forestalling; so that the lights of the House on the subject were against the reasoning of the right hon. secretary. He wished to appeal to facts, notwithstanding the authority of Dr. Smith, however high he rated him. Meat was a penny or three halfpence per pound cheaper sixty miles from London than it was in the capital. And to what cause was it to be ascribed? The

cause was, that Smithfield market was a mockery; for there were places at a small distance from London, which formed a kind of middle market, where the salesman and the jobber, or the carcase-butcher, in collusion, settled the prices to the disadvantage of the grazier and the farmer, who were thus deprived of competition in the market, and to the great distress of the public, who were thus compelled to pay, not only the per-centage profit to the jobber, but the extortion he might also please to make. These facts, he conceived to be better than the speculative reasoning of Adam Smith, whose arguments, however substantial they might be, the public could not feed upon. If the poor were to rise in a mass, on account of the high price of meat, he suspected the right hon. gentleman would prefer the riot act to all the reasonings of Adam Smith. The salesman and butcher, and the clerk of the market, had all agreed, that forestalling was the sole cause of the dearth of butchers' meat; and he did not see how the bill could injure the grazier, since its object was to enable every person to send his cattle to Smithfield market. He wished at least the bill to pass for a limited time, because if the effects of it were not good, it could be easily altered or repealed. There were scenes of misery among the poorer classes in consequence of the high price of meat, of which gentlemen could have no conception. It was not consistent with humanity to get rid of the bill, by telling the poor that the market would find its level; they might as well tell them at once they were not hungry.

Mr. *Windham* (Secretary at war) observed, that it was said this question was to be decided by facts, not by abstract reasoning. But by what other means was it to be decided but by reasoning? Did not those who supported the bill, take certain facts, draw conclusions from them, and thence infer that the measure proposed was the remedy? He could not but think that the opinion of Adam Smith was, in the full, as good as the opinion of the parties formed upon their own facts. This was a subject upon which the most intelligent were obliged to proceed with caution. It was said, that the price of every thing had increased since the laws against forestalling were repealed; but, had not every thing else, as well as meat increased in price, and was it not imputable to the increase of money and the

more general diffusion of wealth? Something more was necessary than a number of facts; it was necessary to prove that the facts warranted the conclusion. He could not admit the parties to be better judges upon this question. Because connected with their own profession, than men who had better means of studying the general principles applicable to it. It was rather whimsical in the hon. gentleman who spoke last to deny the reality of the new lights of the present age, considering some of the opinions he held. These lights were false and fallacious in the sense that some understood them, and applicable to general theories alone. But here the basis of the new light was experience. Men had formerly turned little of their attention to commercial subjects; now, the experience of every country had shown the bad effects of old regulations, and proved that a free trade was the most beneficial. The hon. gentleman had appealed to humanity, but could it be supposed that every member was not well disposed to make the condition of the poor as comfortable as possible? Would not the lowering the price of meat be equally beneficial to the poor, to the rich, to every class in the community? The question was, the means to be used. He thought it for the advantage of all to avoid tampering with laws on this subject, and therefore he was against the bill. It was really whimsical to hear it stated that the farmer was injured by the jobbers, and could not get his cattle brought to market. Any one must have been led to think, that not jobbers but robbers were the persons pointed at in the bill. And what was the evil under which the farmer laboured? Why, nothing but this, that he was induced by the price offered to part with his cattle on the road, without bringing them to London! And this was the violence complained of! He was convinced that the parties bringing forward this bill meant well, but he thought any regulations on the subject pernicious. The jobber facilitated and insured the regular supply of the market. The men of capital were enabled to stand the different fluctuations of the market, which men trading with less capital, or each man trading for himself, could not do. These middle men facilitated the attainment of the great object, the public advantage. They were the intermediate wheels which in moral and physical machines communicated between the first and the last and pro-

duced the perfection of the whole. Considering this bill, therefore, as likely to render the supply of the market insecure and irregular, he was decidedly against it.

Mr. Pitt said, that he could not, consistently with his duty, give a silent vote. He had conversed with the persons who had suggested this measure, and was convinced of their good intentions, though he differed in opinion from them. He believed there were many instances in which the abuses complained of existed, and he also believed the capitalists sometimes trenched the profits of the fair trader; yet he would rather leave the evil to correct itself, than endanger the regular supply of the market. There were three articles which people employed as stock in trade, industry, skill, and capital; and he who had the most of all would trade the best to advantage. How were we to find laws to equalize these? Two of them, skill and industry, could not be equalized. There was no way left, then, but to exclude capital, and that would destroy the vital principle of commerce, by taking away its security. He found in Dr. Smith, that there could be no principal of competition between the small carcase butcher, and the large one; and though they might produce more competition among the small ones, by shutting out that line of competitors, who, on account of their capitals, were enabled to trade to the greatest advantage, and thereby perhaps, in some few instances, produce better general effects; yet they would at the same time, trench on competition, and deprive the public of its best and permanent resource. Instead of attempting, therefore, to realize wild theories, it appeared better to follow the ordinary course of things, and to leave trade open and unfettered; for this, at least, was the result of experience, dictated by practice, and attested by the fate of every country. Mere cheapness he did not consider to be so great an object as a reasonable certainty of supply, and by the present mode of barter, the markets could not fluctuate arbitrarily and suddenly, as they might do by a legislative interference, leaving the poor to a precarious and sometimes miserable subsistence.

The question being put, That the word "now" stand part of the question, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS { Mr. Tierney - - - } 7
 { Mr. Mainwaring - - - }

NOES { Mr. Secretary Dundas - } 39
 { Mr. Pole Carew - - - }

So it passed in the negative. After which the amendments were ordered to be read a second time on this day three months.

Debate in the Commons on the Bank Restriction Continuance Bill.] June 15. Mr. Best, from the Bank of England, presented the following paper:

Resolution of the Court of Directors of the Bank of England, on the 13th June 1797.

"At a Court of Directors at the Bank, on Tuesday, the 13th June 1797.—The governor laid before the court the following Letter from the chancellor of the exchequer: to the governor and deputy governor of the Bank; viz.—Downing street, June 12th 1797.—'Gentlemen; 'On a consideration of the particulars 'which you have communicated to me, 'respecting the state of the cash and 'bullion in the Bank, and the alteration 'which has taken place since the order of 'the 26th February, I feel strongly im- 'pressed with an opinion, that it would 'not be for the public interest, or for that 'of the Bank, under all circumstances, 'that the Bank should re-commence pay- 'ments in cash, at the period when the act 'passed this session would expire. I 'therefore think it my duty to request you 'to state to your court, that unless I 'should receive any further communica- 'tion from them which might tend to 'change this opinion, it is my intention, 'on an early day, to move for leave to 'bring in a bill to prolong the prohibition 'now subsisting. I have, &c. W. PITT."

"Resolved,—That this court do assent to the measure proposed in the chancellor of the exchequer's letter, for prolonging the prohibition, now subsisting, of paying in specie, which, under the present circumstances of the country, appears to the court expedient to be continued for a limited time; but it may be adviseable that a power should be reserved to shorten the time, and enable the Bank to renew its payments in cash, in such a manner, and under such authority, as shall be judged proper."

Mr. Pitt said, that as the period was nearly elapsed during which the Bank were prohibited from paying in specie, it became necessary to consider the probable effect of suffering the prohibition to ex-

pire; and although it was extremely desirable that the Bank should resume its usual operations, and although he had great satisfaction in finding that so much difficulty as might have been expected to arise from the suspension of the ordinary functions of the Bank had by no means taken place, yet he thought that the restriction having passed, it required more than usual circumspection in taking it off, and parliament should take care that the Bank should not again be placed in a state of hazard, unless they had a clear and confident opinion it would be perfectly safe for it to resume its usual mode of payment on the day now fixed for that purpose. He thought it would not, under all the circumstances, be prudent to allow the Bank to do so. He had stated this to be his opinion in his communication to the Bank directors, and they had concurred in that opinion; but he wished, if any measure was adopted for continuing the restriction, that it should be subject to such modifications as might enable them to resume their payments, when, upon full examination of the matter, it might be thought prudent to do so. He had the satisfaction to say, that, although he did not think it prudent that the restriction should cease on the 24th, yet there was in the affairs of the Bank, with regard to the means of payment in cash, an improvement that was highly consoling, and that the apprehension of their not recovering their ability to pay in the accustomed manner, was greatly exaggerated when the subject came first before the House. The House, he was confident, would see the reason why he did not now enter into particulars. He then moved, "That leave be given to bring in a bill to continue, for a time to be limited, the said act, under certain regulations and restrictions."

Mr. *W. Smith* did not mean to oppose the motion. He had only to observe, that those who thought properly upon this subject could not expect all the difficulty of it to be felt immediately; seeing that the facility of the moment to issue paper was great. This measure he believed to be no surprise upon any body; for no one could have expected that the Bank would resume its payments in cash on the 24th of June.

Mr. *Hussey* wished the chancellor of the exchequer to give the House some account of the situation of the Bank now, as compared with its situation at the time

when the restriction was laid on. The public had only the opinion of the chancellor of the exchequer as to the necessity of continuing the restriction. They knew nothing of the amount, or of the nature of the discounts of the Bank, or of the quantity of paper issued in lieu of cash. They knew not what calls might be made on the Bank for cash when they were allowed to open; and to allow the Bank to go on to an unlimited amount, appeared to him to be a thing which might have about it a degree of hazard which the public were not aware of.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the comparative situation of the Bank, with reference to Bank notes and bullion, was very considerably improved. The discounts of the Bank, and the issue of paper, although liberal and equal to the exigencies of commerce, were by no means unlimited or unqualified. Nothing had issued but upon a solid and corresponding capital. He was anxious for the termination of the restriction; but although that could not be on the day appointed, yet it was a satisfaction to the public, that the inconvenience of the measure was much less than had been foretold. Indeed, the consequence of the measure had been the reverse of what had been predicted by its opponents.

Mr. *S. Thornton* said, that the Bank had been extremely guarded in the issue of its paper, which did not now amount to more than the usual average for some years past.—Leave was given to bring in the bill.

June 16. The Bill was brought in, and read a first time. On the motion, that it be read a second time,

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the bill was the same as the former one, with the omission of the clause of indemnity, now unnecessary, and the clause empowering the Bank to pay in cash upon a given notice. It was the wish of the Bank to be enabled to resume their payments, under certain restrictions, without notice.—The Bill was then read a second time.

June 19. The Bill was committed, and the blank for limiting the restriction was filled up with the words "one month after the commencement of the next session of parliament." Mr. *Pitt* then proposed his clause, providing, that it shall be lawful for the Bank directors to issue cash in payment of the whole or part of any debt

outstanding against them, at any time during the continuance of the act, on giving five days notice to the Speaker of the House of Commons, giving a description of the debt which they intend so to discharge, which notice the Speaker is to cause to be inserted forthwith in the London Gazette.—Mr. W. Smith wished to know whether it was meant to give to the Bank a power of selection as to the persons whom they were to pay in cash during the continuance of this act? He saw no good reason why it should be so.—Mr. Pitt said, that the Bank would not by this clause have the power of selection, for it directed, not that they should name any individuals whom they intended to pay, but that they should give a description of the debt which they intended to discharge in cash. The object of the clause was, that the Bank should be enabled to open gradually; they must have some discretion in doing so; and it could only be done by their choosing the species of demand which they should prefer, and giving a description of it in their notice.—The clause was agreed to; and the bill passed its remaining stages without opposition.

Mr. Bryan Edwards's Bill, to repeal the Act for making Negroes Real Assets.]

June 13. Mr. Bryan Edwards presented to the House, a bill "to repeal so much of an act, made in the 5th George 2nd, intituled, 'an act for the more easy Recovery of Debts in his Majesty's Plantations and Colonies in America,' as makes Negroes Real Assets for the Payment of Debts:" and the same was read a first time.

June 16. On moving the second reading of the Bill,

Mr. Bryan Edwards said:—Mr. Speaker; For the satisfaction of some hon. gentlemen, who have suggested to me doubts concerning the nature, propriety, and extent of the present bill, I beg permission to explain the principle on which it is founded, and to point out the consequences which I hope will be produced by it, if, fortunately, it shall pass into a law.—Whatever, Sir, may be thought of the slave trade, as it is conducted in Africa, and however gentlemen may be divided in opinion concerning the necessity of its continuance, or the means of its suppression, there is one sentiment in which all of us must cordially unite, namely, that after the poor captive Afri-

cans are put into our possession, and landed in our colonies, they are entitled to every reasonable indulgence which the laws of humanity can dictate, and that they ought to be secured in the enjoyment of the few necessities and comforts which are allowed them, by every possible means, as far as is consistent with the maintenance of that subordination, without which the colonists themselves would soon cease to exist.—Now, Sir, in what light does the law of Geo. 2nd, part of which I propose to repeal (a law, which I blush to state was enacted by a British parliament, in favour of British creditors), consider the unfortunate Africans in our plantations? Sir, it ranks them in the catalogue of chattels, considers them as moveables, and declares "that they may be seized on, extended and sold for the satisfaction of debts, as well of simple contract as of specialty, in the same manner as personal estates in any of the plantations, are seized, extended and sold;" in other words, this act of parliament, adopting and reviving the odious and unnatural principle of the Roman law, degrades our fellow creatures to the condition of beasts that perish. By making them liable to be levied upon by creditors, and sold as assets by executors, apart from the lands, along with horned cattle, horses, mares, mules, sheep, goats, and asses, it supposes the wretched African to be equally insensible to kindness, and patient under injury with those animals, and equally devoid of all the soft, amiable affections, and exquisite feelings which adorn and dignify our nature, and render man more pre-eminent in the scale of creation.—Let us consider, Sir, for a moment, the situation of a well-disposed negro under this merciless, diabolical system. After having suffered the horrors of captivity in his native country, and sustained the miseries of the middle passage, he finds himself placed in the protection of a mild and merciful master, under whose fostering care and tender assiduity, he begins at length to forget his sorrows, and even rejoices that he has been removed from a country of savage men and barbarous manners, to a land of security, civilization, and christianity. Sir, this is no picture of the fancy, for that many such instances are to be found in all our colonies, I do solemnly declare; and if any man shall deny the fact, I maintain that he either knows not the colonies, or gives the lie to his own observations.

Here, then, we behold the poor negro obtaining at length a comfortable establishment; he has built himself a house, is happy in a wife, and sees a young family rising around him. His provision-ground, the creation of his own industry and the staff of his existence, affords him not only support, but the means also of adding something to the mere necessities of life. Let us now reverse the medal, and look to the master. A hurricane destroys in a moment all his prospects of affluence, and the vengeance of the law, more remorseless than the elements, is added to the wrath of the Almighty! His wretched negro is seized on by the sheriff's officer, forcibly separated from his wife and children, dragged to public auction, purchased by a stranger, and sent (loaded with chains) to terminate his miserable existence in the mines of Mexico, excluded for ever from the light of heaven; and all this without any crime or demerit on his part, real or pretended. He is punished because his master is unfortunate. I do not believe that any case of force or fraud in Africa can be productive of such misery as this. Neither can it be urged that, like some of those unauthorized cases of cruelty which were charged against the planters in this House, it occurs but seldom: Sir, I grieve to add, that it occurs every day, and, under the present system, will continue to occur, so long as men shall continue to be unfortunate.—I may be told, perhaps, that ever since the first introduction of negroes into our plantations, they have been subject to the payment of what are called simple contract debts, by the practice and regulations of the colonies themselves. Sir, I scorn to have recourse to concealment or falsehood. The charge is true; but I maintain that the system originated with this country, not with the colonies. The trade laws of this kingdom, from the first intercourse of our subjects with Africa, considered the negroes as merchandize. As such, they were purchased on the coast by British merchants, and as such, they were sold to the colonists. The colonial assemblies might, indeed, in the first instance, have attached them to the soil, but the case was, that the first legislators in the plantations were not planters, but merchants; they were men who had acquired immense wealth by privateering; part of which they vested in loans at high interest to the planters, and took especial care to obtain all possible security for

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their money, making not only the person, but the property also of the debtor, liable to their demands, and by the shortest course possible. Thus the writ of execution, in most of the islands, comprehends not only the writs of *fieri facias* and *elegit*; but also the *capias ad satisfaciendum*; and negroes being held as personal property, the miserable victims are generally seized on, in the first instance, as being the most saleable parts of the debtor's effects.—About the years 1730 or 1731, some attempts were made in the colonies to put the laws of debtor and creditor on a different footing, and to relieve the poor negroes from the insupportable hardship, by attaching them to the land, and giving creditors, on simple contract, and legatees, another sort of security for their demands. Nothing could be more just, reasonable, and humane; but the merchants of this kingdom took the alarm: those of Bristol in particular (a very tender-hearted people) were loud in their clamours on this occasion, and petitioned the parliament for its interposition. The colonies had no advocates in the British legislature, and the act of Geo. 2nd passed both Houses, without a single dissenting voice! —I admit, Sir, that the repeal of this law will do very little towards the relief of the negroes, without colonial co-operation. Farther, and much stronger measures are necessary, to which the legislatures of the colonies are alone competent, before any great good can be produced. It is their province (not ours) to redress the grievance, and give sufficient security to the creditor, without violating the rights of humanity. All that I propose is, to remove out of their way the obstacle of a British act of parliament, which at present forms an insuperable bar against all considerable attempts to meliorate and improve the condition of the enslaved negroes. From my knowledge of the gentlemen who compose the legislature in the largest and most considerable of our islands, I am persuaded (this obstacle being removed) that they will not be left behind us in a contest of humanity.

The Bill was read a second time, and passed without opposition.

Debate in the Lords on the Bill concerning the Meeting of Parliament.] July 11. Lord Grenville said, he held in his hand a bill, the object of which was to shorten the period of notice, which, as the law at

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present stood, the crown was obliged to give previous to the meeting of parliament, whenever its being convened was deemed necessary, however urgent the necessity of its being assembled. As the law now stood, the crown could not call parliament together without giving forty days notice. It was not necessary for him to detain their lordships by inquiring into the reasons, upon which that act and its provisions were grounded; it was sufficient for him to remind the House, that the circumstances of the moment, the different state and situation of the country, from its state and situation when that statute passed, evidently pointed out the expediency of shortening the period of notice previous to the assembling of the legislature. If we were a free people, if the subjects of the British crown lived under a regular and well-ordered system of government, it must be acknowledged that those invaluable blessings were to be ascribed to the wisdom and firmness of parliament. In like manner, if we wished to continue a free people, if danger was to be apprehended, if the times were critical and difficult, and alarms were felt, whether justly or not, for the preservation of that liberty and that prosperity which the country had so long enjoyed, the country could only look with confidence for protection, safety, and security to the wisdom and firmness of parliament. It became, therefore, highly necessary to enable his majesty to call forth that wisdom and that firmness sooner than he could as the constitution stood at present. Instead of the crown's being obliged to give forty days notice previous to the meeting of parliament, when occasion required that his majesty should call them together, the principal object of the bill was to empower the crown to convene them on fourteen days notice. He need, he thought, say nothing in defence of this alteration of the law, as it rather went to amend the constitution and add to the popular weight in its scale, than violate the one in a reprehensible degree, or diminish the other. It must always be with Englishmen very desirable to facilitate the recourse to parliament. The bill had been some time since put into his hands by a noble lord, who had on all occasions manifested so steady, so active, and so laudable an attention to his public duty, that if he was not present, his absence was solely to be ascribed to his being engaged elsewhere in discharge of another duty

equally useful to his country, as a colonel of one of the militia regiments. It was necessary for him to state, that the bill embraced another important object. Their lordships would recollect that by an act of queen Anne, the last parliament, on the demise of the crown, is impowered to sit for six months, or till a new one can be convened; but doubts had arisen, whether in case of the demise of the crown, in the interval between the dissolution of parliament and the return of the writs for a new one, the new parliament could sit. The bill was calculated to remove those doubts and to provide for the difficulty.—His lordship then presented the bill, which was intituled, "An act to shorten the time now required for giving Notice of the Royal Intention of his Majesty, his Heirs, and Successors, that the Parliament shall meet and be holden for the dispatch of business; and more effectually to provide for the Meeting of Parliament in the case of a Demise of the Crown." On the motion, that the bill be read a first time,

The Duke of *Norfolk* asked if the bill was meant to be temporary, or permanent?

Lord *Grenville* said, he certainly meant it to be a permanent bill, as its objects were such as would be useful at all times and under all circumstances.—The bill was read a first time. It was read a second time on the 12th, and passed without opposition.

East India Budget.] July 14. The House having resolved itself into a Committee, to take into consideration the State of the Finances of India,

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, that although the finances of India were of a very extensive and complicated nature, he should not waste much time in their discussion, because the difficulties which existed formerly were now removed. Heretofore the accounts of some of the settlements were imperfect and confused, but by the prudent regulations which had been established, they had of late years been reduced to a tolerable state of accuracy. The accounts which he was then about to submit to the committee had been made out to the latest possible period, and so far as related to the explanation of their statements he proposed to follow the same plan which he had hitherto adopted, excepting that he meant to confine himself merely to their result, and not to enter particularly into their detail. He left other gentlemen, however, to make what

observations, and propose what questions they thought proper. Having said thus much, he proceeded to the following detail:

BENGAL.

REVENUES — Average Revenue
1793-4 to 1795-6.....£5,834,690

More than average last year 60,477

Estimated for 1795-6 5,631,278
Actual amount 5,694,194

More than the estimate 62,916

CHARGES—Estimated for 1795-6.. 3,508,823
Actual amount 3,636,944

More than the estimate 128,121

Deducting the excess of the revenue from the excess of charge, the actual amount of net revenue is less than estimated 65,205

And the net revenue of this year is 2,057,250

ESTIMATES, 1796-7.

REVENUES—Estimated to amount to 5,710,511
CHARGES— Ditto ditto 3,733,860

Nett revenue 1,976,651

Revenues estimated more than actual amount 1795-6 16,317
Charges ditto ditto 96,915

The nett revenue estimated for 1796-7 is less than the preceding year 80,599

MADRAS.

REVENUES — Average 1793-4 to 1795-6 cannot properly be stated as at Bengal, on account of some receipts incidental only to particular years, and other circumstances. On forming the average of the more permanent articles of revenue of the three years preceding 1795-6, it appears that the revenues of last year have exceeded the said average, to the amount of 137,976

REVENUES—Were estimated for 1795-6 at..... 2,024,030
and actually amounted to 1,894,304

Being less than the estimate 129,726

CHARGES — Were estimated for 1795-6 to amount to..... 1,844,787
The actual amount was 2,123,579

Being more than the estimate 278,792

Adding the excess of charge to the deficiency of revenue, the actual account is worse than the estimate 408,518

ESTIMATES, 1796-7.

REVENUES—Estimated to amount to 2,159,402
CHARGES— ditto ditto 2,005,225

Estimated nett revenue 154,177

BOMBAY.

REVENUES — Average 1793-4 to 1795-6 294,937
More than average stated last year 13,680

Revenues for 1795-6 estimated at 269,776
Actually amounted to 277,596

More than estimated 7,820

CHARGES—Charges of 1795-6 estimated at 718,901
Actually amounted to 732,876

More than estimated 13,975

Deducting excess of revenue from the excess of charge, the actual nett revenue is less than the estimated 6,155

ESTIMATES, 1796-7.

REVENUES—Estimated to amount to 284,959
CHARGES— Ditto ditto 777,973

Nett excess of charge as estimated 493,014

Which is more than the nett excess of charges actually incurred in 1795-6 37,733

BENCOOLEN AND OTHER SETTLEMENTS.

Revenues of Fort Malbro' on average of three years, 1793-4 to 1795-6 5,021

Charges ditto 78,835

Supplies from Bengal to fort Marlbro', Pinang, &c. estimated for 1795-6 81,780

The actual amount was 104,154

Being more than estimated 22,374

Supplies estimated for 1796-7 90,364

GENERAL VIEW.

RESULT OF THE YEAR 1795-6 COLLECTIVELY.

REVENUES—Bengal 5,694,194
Madras 1,894,303
Bombay 277,597

7,866,094

CHARGES—Bengal	3,636,944	
Madras	2,123,579	
Bombay.....	732,876	
		6,493,399
Nett revenues of the Presidencies	1,372,695	
Deduct supplies to Ben- coolen, &c.	104,154	
The remainder	1,268,541	
Deduct farther, Interest on the debts, Bengal	350,551	
Madras	15,294	
Bombay.....	48,905	
Total interest	414,750	
Nett supplies from the territorial revenues..	853,791	
Add amount of sales, of imports, certificates, &c.	453,605	
Amount applicable to the purchase of invest- ments, payment of commercial charges, &c.	1,307,306	
Application of the preceding sum. At Bengal, investment, including Charges .. £.1,459,547		
Madras	669,765	
Bombay.....	258,250	
Bencoolen ..	18,443	
		2,401,005
Exceeds amount applicable from revenues, &c. as above	1,093,609	
Cargoes invoiced to Europe in 1795-6.....	1,954,153	

GENERAL VIEW.

RESULT OF ESTIMATES 1796-7, COLLECTIVELY.

REVENUES—Bengal	5,710,511	
Madras	2,159,402	
Bombay.....	284,959	
		8,154,872
CHARGES—Bengal	3,733,859	
Madras	2,005,225	
Bombay.....	777,973	
		6,517,057
Nett revenues of the three Presi- dencies	1,637,815	
Deduct supplies to Bencoolen, &c.	90,364	
Estimated surplus from the reve- nues	1,547,451	
Deduct farther interest on the debts	419,344	
Nett estimated surplus from the territorial revenues	1,128,107	

Add estimated amount sales of im- ports and certificates	455,901	
Amount estimated to be applicable in 1796-7 to the purchase of in- vestments, payment of commer- cial charges, &c.	1,584,008	
Exceeds actual sum in 1795-6	£.276,612	

DEBTS IN INDIA.

Amount stated last year	6,813,736	
Amount this year	7,146,083	
Increase	332,347	
Debts transferred in the year	685,019	

DEBTS BEARING INTEREST.

Amount last year	5,328,868	
Amount this year	5,590,142	
Increase of debt bearing interest	261,274	
Amount of interest payable by ac- counts of last year	400,252	
Amount of interest payable this year	419,344	
Increase of interest payable annually	19,092	

ASSETS IN INDIA.

Consisting of cash, goods, &c. last year.....	8,867,266	
Ditto by the present statements ..	8,958,609	
Increase of assets	91,403	

Deducting the increase of assets from the above increase of debts, the company's property in India is less by.....	240,944	
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HOME ACCOUNTS.

Aggregate amount of sales was ..	8,252,309	
Exceeded last year £.153,814		
Sales of company's goods estimated at.....	6,088,300	
Actually amounted to	6,153,310	
More than estimated	65,010	
Receipts on sales of company's goods estimated at.....	6,406,300	
The actual receipt was	6,370,077	
Less than estimated	36,223	
Charges and profit on private trade estimated at	148,000	
Actually amounted to	138,957	
Less than estimate	9,043	

GENERAL RESULT.

Balance expected to remain at the end of the year	118,848
Actual balance after discharging a loan from Bank, and receiving in payment for goods upwards of 600,000 <i>l.</i> in company's bonds ..	333,807

Better than estimate 214,959

ESTIMATE, 1797-8.

Receipt for sales of company's goods estimated at	6,555,116
Receipt on private trade goods only a balance of last sale.—	
No estimate can be made of this article.	

RESULT.

That after paying the instalments on the loan to the public, deriving the aid of increase of capital in one million, the deficiency on the 1st of March, 1798, is expected to amount to	1,836,320
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DEBTS AT HOME.

In March 1796, were	7,474,700
In March 1797, were	7,916,459

	Increase 441,759
Occasioned principally by bills of exchange and freight and demurrage, debt on sale of goods under the act greater—some other articles diminished.	

ASSETS.

At home and afloat on the 1st of March, 1796	12,024,312
Ditto on the 1st of March, 1797	12,476,813
	Increase 452,501

Deducting increase of debt from increase of assets, state of affairs at home in 1797 appears better	10,742
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CHINA AND ST. HELENA.

Balance last year in favour of the company	581,174
Ditto this year ditto	337,713
	Less this year 243,461

GENERAL COMPARISON OF DEBTS AND ASSETS.

Increase of debts in India	332,347
Ditto ditto at home	441,759
	Increase of debts 774,106

Increase of assets in India	91,403
Ditto ditto at home	452,501
	543,904

Deduct balance at China and St. Helena less ..	243,461
Nett increase of assets	300,443
Leaves the increase of debts	473,663

By a comparison of accounts presented this year, with estimate on which the arrangement of 1793 was formed, the estimated surplus of 1796-7 is £.1,584,008
Which exceeds the estimate of 1793 by 70,431

Having gone through the whole of his calculation, Mr. Dundas said:—The result of these comparisons has exhibited the state of the company's affairs in an apparently unfavourable point of view; and an inference might be drawn therefrom, that they are upon the decline. It is therefore necessary to recall to the attention of the committee, that conclusions from those data cannot be correct, on account of particular circumstances attending both the former and the present year. As to the former, the revenues of India were very productive, and the effects of the war on the expenditure had not been fully experienced either abroad or at home; the sales were also much more considerable than in any preceding year. But having already submitted to the view of the committee an explanation in detail of almost every item of the accounts, I will only now repeat, that so far from the existence of any ground of alarm, the most favourable prospects may be indulged. The prosperity of the East-India company has been increasing from the period when the operation of the present system was brought into full effect; and the amelioration of the state of their affairs, notwithstanding the war with Tippoo Sultaun, between that period and the present, amounts to no less than eleven millions sterling, computed merely on the increase of assets and the decrease of debts, without taking into account the enhanced value of the revenues of India or the improved state of the commerce. The above important fact is substantiated by the accounts laid before parliament in the periods alluded to. From those documents, an examination has been made of the debts and assets of the company, as they stood in 1783, 1786, and by the last accounts. At the first of these periods, the alteration of system commenced: the company's affairs were involved in great

perplexity, and the public mind was considerably agitated. Various statements were brought forward, both in this House and out of it, according to the views of the parties which then prevailed. The inferences drawn therefrom were of different complexion; but none could be correct, from the imperfect state of the accounts received from India. On the institution of the board of commissioners their first attention was directed to a minute investigation of the affairs of the company, in order to form a judgment of their real situation: but, from the circumstances of the war then concluded, large arrears had accrued, many claims were brought forward, and bills of exchange, to a very considerable amount, had been drawn upon the court of directors; whereby the whole system was so completely deranged, that it was found impossible to form any tolerably accurate statement of the debts of the company, till some degree of regularity could be established: which point was not attained till the year 1786. It follows, therefore, that this is the proper period from which a just comparison can be drawn with the present. From this view it appears, that the debts owing by the company abroad, in April 1786, amounted to 10,284,646*l.* and at home, in January 1787, exclusive of the capital stock, 11,443,349*l.* making, in the whole, 21,727,995*l.* By the present statements, the debts abroad amount to 7,146,083*l.* and at home, 7,916,459*l.*, making the total of debts owing, according to the latest accounts, 15,062,542*l.* From which it appears, that the debts now due by the company are less than in the year 1786 abroad, and 1787 at home, by 6,665,453*l.* The assets of the company abroad at the first period above-mentioned, amounted to 5,421,301*l.*, and at home to 11,824,901*l.* making a total of 17,246,202*l.* The value of the assets abroad by the present statements amounts to 9,296,382*l.* and at home to 12,476,813*l.*, making a total, by the latest accounts, amounting to 21,773,195*l.* The increased amount of the assets, between the former and the present period, is therefore 4,526,993*l.* which sum being added to the above decrease of debt, produces a total of 11,192,446*l.*, and to this amount the amelioration in the company's affairs has taken place, as before stated. It is, however, to be observed, that within those periods, the company were permitted to raise a sum of money, by increasing

their capital stock to the amount of 3,740,000*l.*; but, on the other hand, it is fair to state, by way of counterbalance to this extraordinary receipt, not only an expenditure of almost an equal amount, in consequence of the war with Tippoo, which ended so honourably in 1792, but also the expenses incurred by the present war. The conclusion to be justly drawn from these premises, is, that as under every contingency the affairs of the company have been in a state of improvement, the prospects held out are fully warranted.

The affairs in India continue to exhibit the most favourable aspect. The vigilance and activity of the British fleet having averted the danger threatened by European enemies, the security of the empire, in that part of the world, has no appearance of being exposed to any further interruption than what may be expected at all times, as incident to the vicissitudes inseparable from the fluctuating politics and frequent revolutions of Indian governments. But, even under all the events of that nature which have lately occurred, from the clashing interests in the Mahratta empire, the perplexed situation of the Nizam, and the warlike preparations making by Tippoo Sultaun, such has been the prudent and cautious line of policy with which our governments in India have conducted themselves, that the most friendly disposition towards the English nation has been evinced by every power in Hindostan. The attempts of the enemies of this country to alienate those favourable dispositions have hitherto proved to be completely ineffectual; and I have no doubt, but a pursuit of the same line of conduct which has been observed towards those powers for some years past, will not only be the means of perpetuating that cordiality which subsists with the princes with whom we are in alliance, but will also insure a continuance of the respect, with which we have been of late treated by those with whom we are not so nearly connected. From these circumstances, it may be inferred, that the empire in India wears the appearance of a state of security; and its continuance may be expected from the great care which has been observed to endeavour, by every means to preserve tranquillity, as well by avoiding all interference in the contests of the native powers, as by abstaining from every provocation to hostility. The governments, considering it as the most

effectual method of maintaining and preserving a state of tranquillity, have, nevertheless paid strict attention to the defences of the country, so as to be at all times prepared to repel the attempts of any aggressor, either European or native.

With respect to the internal administration of affairs in the provinces under the government of the company, I see no reason to alter the opinions I have lately offered as to their increasing prosperity. Those opinions, I have the happiness to find, are confirmed by all the advices since received from India, with the only small exception which will be hereafter noticed. Some embarrassments, indeed, have occurred with respect to the finances, from the immense funds which were required for particular purposes as already detailed; but the supplies have been raised with less difficulty than might have been expected, when the high rate of exchange given by the private merchants, and the various modes which now present themselves for the employment of the money of individuals, are taken into consideration. The whole of the additional charges have been paid; the investment has not been hitherto interrupted; but advances have been made, during the year 1795-6, in upwards of a million sterling, beyond the sum applicable, in the usual course, from the surplus revenues and sales of imports from Europe; so that the whole advance for provision exceeded also the amount prescribed in the first instance by the act, more than 1,000,000*l*.

The internal prosperity of the Bengal provinces has suffered no abatement; and the fairest hopes may be entertained, not only of permanency, but improvement. The experience of every year proves the wisdom and policy of the modes of administration which have been introduced. The regulations respecting the landed property in Bengal have been repeatedly brought to the notice of the House. The effect of those regulations is very apparent, the situation of the landed proprietors becomes more respectable, and the property more desirable, and if in any case it has been found that those regulations have borne too hard on the feelings of the parties concerned, by wearing the appearance of an interference, either with their just rights or their prejudices, such modifications have been devised, and partial changes adopted, as could not fail of meeting the wishes and desires of the

respectable part of the community: and, indeed, the unremitted study of the government has been, in framing the regulations, so to establish a proper administration of the laws, that a sense of interest may generally prevail with the landholders, to induce them to pay the most strict attention to the management of their estates. Under the best regulated governments, it will, however, occasionally happen, that no motives whatever are sufficient to restrain some individuals from a course of folly and dissipation, which must necessarily involve themselves and their families in ruin; but, in such an event, the most lenient measures are prescribed, and, indeed, form the principal ground of the late alterations in the code of revenue laws. It may therefore be added, that as these laws are calculated to secure to the natives all the advantages to be derived from successful exertions, those who deviate from them, can have but little claim to the particular consideration of government. Some objections may probably be raised to the assertion of the increasing prosperity of Bengal, from the defalcations in the collection of land revenues, in 1795-6; compared with the preceding year; it is therefore necessary to remark, that the collections of the year 1794-5 included a larger amount of balances than those of 1795-6, and as the general amount of balances has been materially lessened, it naturally resulted, that the gross collection in a following year must lessen likewise. As to the current jumma, or rent-roll, the difference was trivial. Sometimes it is advantageous to the proprietors to withhold their payments, although charged with interest on the arrear; and, it must be expected, that in such an immense collection, balances will always remain at the close of the annual accounts. But this occasional fluctuation is perfectly immaterial, and cannot be considered as a criterion for judging of the actual resources of the country, as it is only the means of throwing an undue proportion of the revenues of one year into the accounts of another.

The improvement of the revenue from customs has already been stated. The effect apprehended from the arrangement reducing the rate has not been produced; on the contrary, the collections of 1795-6 considerably exceeded the preceding year. This improvement appears to have arisen from the external commerce, which

late advices state to have been immense. The exports from the Bengal provinces, exclusive of the company's investment, but including the transit trade of India, from 31st May 1795 to the 1st June 1796, amounted to 2,372,000*l.*, and the imports to 1,309,000*l.*; leaving a balance to be returned of 1,063,000*l.* No account of a similar nature having been before received, a comparison cannot be stated; but from the view of the increase of the duties levied at a reduced rate it may fairly be inferred that the inhabitants of the provinces are increasing in wealth and prosperity. The revenue from salt having already been noticed, I have only to add, that there is every reason to depend upon its permanency. On the expiration of the present contract, under which the opinion is procured, the alteration intended in the mode of provision offers the prospect of the article being again productive; as measures will be adopted to regulate the quantity, and to preserve or improve the quality; as also to prevent other interferences in the trade, which have tended to overstock the market.

The House has, upon different occasions, been informed of the intention of assimilating, as far as possible, the administration of the revenues at the other presidencies, with that in practice in Bengal; and of the difficulties which stood in the way of carrying the proposed changes into effect. It is satisfactory to state, that, by late advices, considerable progress has been made towards accomplishing so desirable an object. The measures adopted, as preparatory to a final and permanent settlement of the lands in the several districts, appear to have produced every effect that could have been hitherto expected. In the districts under the management of the presidency of Madras, the good effects of those measures have already been clearly manifested. In the Circars, several settlements, for different terms of years, have been concluded, upon a plan which has appeared perfectly satisfactory to the renters; inasmuch as they seemed to be convinced, that the object of the proposed alterations was, their own ease and advantage, by having the power of securely retaining the full enjoyment of the produce of their labours. This cannot be evinced in a stronger point of view, than by the return of the inhabitants to several districts, their payment of the arrears of rent, and the satisfaction and contentment which they

have expressed. In the Chicacole Circar, where considerable disturbances had taken place, to the detriment of the company's revenue, and to the injury of the inhabitants of the district, peace is entirely restored, the company's authority is established, and the system reformed: the principal fomenter of the troubles has surrendered himself; and an arrangement has been made of the whole of the Circar, which cannot fail of producing the most beneficial effects, as it is made with every attention to the rights of the zemindars and renters, as well as to the realization of the revenue. With respect to Vizianagram, the collector bears testimony to the good conduct of Narain Rawze, who, on his return to the company's protection, succeeded the late unfortunate zemindar, that fell a sacrifice in resisting the authority of the government. A settlement will be concluded with him without delay, and clauses inserted in the *cowle*, or agreement, providing for the peculiar advantage of the industrious manufacturer, and indeed the inhabitants at large, as they secure the free import of cotton thread, &c. exempt the company's weavers from taxes, and give the most ample encouragement to the inland trade by the Benjarries, or country dealers.

The effect of some late measures in the Guntoo Circar has been so remarkable that it cannot escape particular notice. The frontier station of this Circar rendered it favourable to the attempts of an unruly and turbulent race of people, who, from occupying the passes in the adjacent districts, were constantly, under various pretences, committing acts of devastation and plunder upon the peaceable inhabitants of the Circar. The known unhealthfulness of the jungles and fastnesses to which these depredators retired for refuge, rendered the employment of regular troops against them, not only dangerous, but doubtful in the issue: it became, therefore, an object of great importance to attempt, by conciliatory means to induce them not only to relinquish their former habits of plundering, but to become instruments of protection. To this end, their particular claims were investigated; and as it appeared, that their depredations were frequently to be ascribed to a sense of injuries received from the Guntoo zemindars, it has been thought proper to free them from all dependence upon those zemindars, and to allow them the undisturbed possession of the villages they for-

merly enjoyed. It was not to be imagined that this people could at once shake off inveterate habits, and betake themselves to the quiet occupations of husbandry: employment is therefore found, by embodying a number, as sibendies, under the command of an European officer. The zemindars are hereby deprived of the power of creating a disturbance, as heretofore, whenever it suited their interest, and the country is protected by those who had been the invaders.

I have been thus particular in order to show the zeal of the company's servants to carry into effect the ardent wish of their employers, that the various classes of the natives, under the British dominion in India, may enjoy every possible protection of their persons and property. Many other instances of that zeal, and of its effects, might be adduced, but it would trespass too much upon the time of the committee. I would, however, beg leave to add, that in the Poligar countries and Southern districts, the inhabitants have experienced the like beneficial effect from the present mild administration as those of the North; and have, in some instances, exemplified their confidence in the justice of the government in a very striking manner. The recourse to military force for the collection of the revenues, it has been remarked, is no longer in use in the Bengal provinces. Every alternative is resorted to, that it may become unnecessary in these districts likewise; and the greatest care is used to prevent the inhabitants from being oppressed, either by the European or native servants of the company. The same attention to the interests of the people is manifested, in the encouragement afforded, in every instance, where a prospect appears of increasing or extending the manufactures, either by the abolition of duties found to be oppressive, or by enlarging the field of employment for industry by introducing valuable plantations. In some of the ceded districts considerable success has attended these measures: the cultivation of indigo and of the sugar cane, also the rearing the silk-worm, promise very favourably. In other places the silk-worm, has almost entirely failed; but success has generally attended the cochineal insect lately introduced.

The countries subject to the nabob of Arcot and rajah of Tanjore, I am led to apprehend, do not exhibit the same promising appearances; but as they are not

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under the direct management of the company's government, it may not be altogether proper here to state the causes which have interfered with their prosperity. It was very much wished to have obtained a modification of the treaties on which the company's connexion with them rests; but obstacles have presented themselves. As the whole subject is now under consideration, the effect of the measures in contemplation will be more properly stated on some future occasion.

On the whole, I trust, it will appear, that the internal affairs on the coast exhibit, in a degree, the same symptoms of prosperity as those of Bengal: and, if a judgment of the external prosperity may be formed by the increase of customs as at that presidency, it is evident, that the situation in this respect is no less favourable. The newly acquired territories under the management of the government of Bombay, have placed that presidency in a more respectable point of view, and have added to its importance, both politically and commercially. The difficulties in the way of any arrangement of the revenue system in the ceded countries appeared, on first taking possession of the districts, to be very considerable. The inhabitants in some parts, were barely in a state of civilization: the life or death of the natives was at the capricious disposal of the petty rajahs; and the most cruel oppressions were continually practised, both by those rajahs and the principal landholders, on the inferior classes of the people: it was therefore no easy task to introduce a system (however beneficial it might appear in its design towards the country at large) that would strike at the root of abuses, so long practised by the leading men of that country. It has, however, been, in a great degree, accomplished by the zeal and exertions of the present government of Bombay. Adauluts, or courts of justice, have been formed; the rajahs' dispensing power of life and death is taken from them: and by a moderate display of just severity towards those who were refractory, the authority of the government had been fully established, and the contrition and submission of the offenders so far obtained, that resistance was no longer expected against the regulations which it was thought proper to introduce, either for the collection of the revenues or the administration of justice. I am, however, concerned to find, that by advices received within this

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last week, the expectation in that regard has been disappointed, in a small degree, through the turbulency of one of the northern rajahs, which at first threatened serious consequences. Advices of a later date, received at the same time, have relieved my apprehensions, by the information afforded, that the rebellion was confined to a small part only of the district, and that there was every prospect of its speedy suppression. In the rest of the province, the natives manifested the most perfect attachment or submission to the company's government. The settlement with the rajahs for five years, commencing with the year 1794-5, having been noticed to the House on former occasions, I have only now to remark, that notwithstanding the above unfortunate circumstance, the payments stipulated have otherwise been made with an unprecedented degree of punctuality, and that the general collections, both on account of land revenue and of customs, had exceeded the expectation of the government of Bombay. The advices further state, that there is good ground to hope, that the effects of the arrangements for the internal government of the provinces would lead to the easy realization of the jumma formed by Tippoo, if the rajahs' intervention could be dispensed with, as the resources of the country were ascertained to be adequate. The treaty with the rajah of Travencore has been noticed, as well as the situation of the other small resources of this presidency.—Mr. Dundas then moved his several Resolutions founded upon the preceding statement; which were agreed to.

Debate in the Commons, on the Bill concerning the Meeting of Parliament.]

July 17. The order of the day being read, for going into a committee, on the bill to shorten the time, now required, for giving notice of the royal intention of his majesty, his heirs, and successors, that the parliament shall meet and be holden for the dispatch of business, and more effectually to provide for the meeting of parliament in the case of a demise of the crown."

Mr. *Wigley* said, he did not know why this bill was now introduced. It gave to ministers the power of calling parliament together within fourteen days, in all cases in which they might think proper. That they should be so called together in case of rebellion or invasion, or imminent

danger of invasion, was right; but to give this power to the minister, to be exercised at his will and pleasure, did not appear to him to be prudent. He objected therefore to the Speaker leaving the chair.

Mr. *Pitt* was surprised at the opposition to the bill. It could not be on any ground of constitutional jealousy against the executive government, for it only gave a power of calling parliament together, not of doing any thing without the advice of parliament. From the modern improvements in travelling, and the celerity of communication from one part of the country to the other; fourteen days was a sufficient notice for the meeting of parliament. He thought the executive government ought to have this power to call for the aid of the other branches of the legislature; and that it ought to be made matter of general regulation.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, that as a temporary measure, he had nothing to say against the bill, because the circumstances of the times might make it necessary. But as a general measure, he must oppose it; for there might be cases in which the power the minister would by this bill have, might be extremely dangerous. He did not like the idea of the whole parliament being called at the will of a minister in fourteen days, in any case which he might think fit to call them together from distant parts of the country, to hear what he had to say to them. He had so much objection to the bill, that he must divide the House upon it.

As there were not 40 members in the House there was no division, but an immediate adjournment.

July 18. On the order of the day for going into a committee on the bill,

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, he had no objections to it as a temporary measure, but he had a great many objections to it as a permanent one. It was contended that 14 days were a sufficient notice. But was a notice all that was required? Were members of parliament to be perpetual drudges in the service of the public, and were they to dedicate no part of their time to their own private concerns? This was not the situation in which members were intended by the constitution to be placed. They were appointed as representatives of the people, for the purpose of meeting on great occasions to control the executive government. The bill would put them upon the footing of a

military corps, ready to be called out by the minister at a moment's warning. If the militia could be called out in time of peace at the orders of the commanding officers, no gentleman of independent fortune would accept of a commission in the service; and in the same manner, if this new regulation was adopted, it would banish gentlemen of fortune from parliament. The bill would prevent a number of members from going abroad; in short, it would put them entirely on the footing of a standing army under the command of the minister. He thought it was not at all fitting that such a bill as this should have originated with the aristocracy of the country. He knew that the Lords might legally originate any bill excepting a money bill; but what was legal was one thing, and what was decorous was another. At all former periods when any infringement of the constitution was deemed necessary, it was done at first by way of a temporary measure; for instance, the Militia act and Mr. Grenville's act, were at first only passed as temporary measures; but in the present instance the infringement was to be rendered perpetual; for these reasons he should give his hearty opposition.

Mr. Pitt said, that the bill did not go to vary the power vested by the constitution in the executive government; but merely to narrow the time in which that power might be exercised. The question, then, was simply this, whether fourteen days was a sufficient notice to members of parliament? That is was sufficient the practice of the constitution already established, by giving the king the power of assembling parliament upon that notice, when the militia were called out, or in cases of actual rebellion. The hon. baronet urged the propriety of not departing from the usage of our ancestors, forgetting the modern improvement in the conveyance of letters and travelling by post, by which a shorter notice was become equivalent to one of greater length in former times. And was there any resemblance between the king calling parliament to consult them upon the affairs of the nation, and putting them under martial law? Still less could it be an objection to the measure, that because two or three members wished to go abroad to spend the summer in another country, that his majesty should be deprived of the advice and assistance of the legislature at a critical conjuncture. As to the obser-

vation, that it was indecent that it should originate in the House of Lords, as its provisions were equally applicable to both Houses, he saw no indecency in its originating in the one more than in the other.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Charles Yorke	-	-	}	49
		Mr. Perceval	-	-		
NOES	{	Sir William Pulteney	-	-	}	3
		Mr. Wigley	-	-		

The bill was accordingly committed; after which it went through the remaining stages without opposition.

The King's Speech at the Close of the Session.] July 20. His Majesty put an end to the Session, with the following Speech to both Houses:

"My Lords and Gentlemen;

"I cannot put an end to this session of parliament, without returning you my most sincere and cordial thanks, for the assiduity and zeal with which you have applied yourselves to the important objects which have required your attention, and for the wisdom and firmness which you have manifested in the new and difficult emergencies for which you have had to provide.

"I must particularly express the just sense I entertain of the salutary and effectual provisions which you made for strengthening the means of national defence, and the measures adopted for obviating the inconveniences which were to be apprehended to credit from the temporary suspension of payments in cash by the Bank; as well as of the promptitude, vigour, and effect, with which you afforded me your assistance and support in suppressing the daring and treasonable mutiny which broke out in a part of my fleet, and in counteracting so dangerous and pernicious an example.

"I have the satisfaction to acquaint you, that, since the accession of the present emperor of Russia, the commercial engagements between the two countries have been renewed, in such a manner as will, I doubt not, materially conduce to their mutual interests.

"Gentlemen of the House of Commons;

"I must return you my particular thanks for the liberal and extensive provision which you have made for the various exigencies of the public service; and, while I lament the necessity which

increased them to so large an amount, it is a consolation to me to observe the attention you employed in distributing the heavy burthens which they occasioned, in such a manner as to render their pressure as little severe as possible to my people.

“ My Lords and Gentlemen;

“ The issue of the important negotiation in which I am engaged, is yet uncertain; but, whatever may be the event, nothing will have been wanting, on my part, to bring it to a successful termination on such conditions as may be consistent with the security, honour, and essential interests of my dominions. In the mean time, nothing can so much tend to forward the attainment of peace, as the continuance of that zeal, exertion, and public spirit, of which my subjects have given such conspicuous and honourable proofs, and of which the perseverance and firmness of parliament has afforded them so striking an example.”

Then the lord chancellor, by his majesty's command, prorogued the parliament to the 5th of October. It was afterwards further prorogued to the 2nd of November.

SECOND SESSION

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH PARLIAMENT

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

The King's Speech on Opening the Session.] November 2. His Majesty opened the Session with the following Speech to both Houses:

“ My Lords and Gentlemen;

“ It is a matter of great concern to me, that the earnest endeavours which I have continued to employ, since I last met you in parliament, to restore to my subjects the blessings of peace, on secure and honourable terms, have unhappily been rendered ineffectual.

The Declaration which I have caused to be published, and the other Papers which I have directed to be laid before you, will, I am confident, abundantly prove to you, and to the world, that every step has been taken on my part, which could tend to accelerate the conclusion of peace; and that the long delay and final rupture of the negotiation are solely to be ascribed to the evasive conduct, the unwarrantable pretensions, and the inor-

dinate ambition of those with whom we have to contend, and above all, to their inveterate animosity against these kingdoms.

“ I have the fullest reliance, under the blessing of Providence, on the vigour and wisdom of your councils, and on the zeal, magnanimity, and courage, of a great and free people, sensible that they are contending for their dearest interests, and determined to show themselves worthy of the blessings which they are struggling to preserve.

Compelled as we are, by the most evident necessity, to persevere in the defence of all that is dear to us, till a more just and pacific spirit shall prevail on the part of the enemy, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we possess means and resources proportioned to the objects which are at stake.

“ During the period of hostilities, and under the unavoidable pressure of accumulated burthens, our revenue has continued highly productive, our national industry has been extended, and our commerce has surpassed its former limits.

“ The public spirit of my people has been eminently displayed; my troops of every description, have acquired fresh claims to the esteem and admiration of their country, and the repeated successes of my navy over all our different enemies, have been recently crowned by the signal and decisive victory with which Providence has rewarded the exertions of my fleet under the command of Admiral lord Duncan. No event could be attended with more important and beneficial consequences, or form a more brilliant addition to the numerous and heroic exploits which, in the course of the present war, have raised to a pitch hitherto unequalled the naval glory of the country.

“ Gentlemen of the House of Commons;

“ I have directed the estimates for the ensuing year to be laid before you. The state of the war, joined to the happy consequences of our recent success, will, I trust, admit of some diminution of expense, consistently with the vigorous efforts which our situation indispensably requires. In considering what may be the best mode of defraying the heavy expense which will still be unavoidable, you will, I am persuaded, bear in mind that the present crisis presents every motive to animate you to the most effectual and spirited exertions; the true value of any temporary sacrifices which you may find

necessary for this purpose, can only be estimated by comparing them with the importance of supporting effectually our public credit, and convincing the enemy that, while we retain an ardent desire for the conclusion of peace on safe and honourable terms, we possess the means, as well as the determination, to support with vigour this arduous contest, as long as it may be necessary for maintaining the safety, honour, and independence, of these kingdoms.

“ My Lords and Gentlemen ;

“ After the experience I have had of your loyalty and attachment to me, and of your anxious regard for the interests of my subjects, I have only to recommend to you a perseverance in the same principles and conduct.

“ The events of every day must more and more impress you with a just sense of the blessings which we derive from our civil and religious establishments, and which have so long distinguished us among all the nations of Europe. These blessings can only be preserved by inculcating and enforcing a due reverence and obedience to the laws, by repressing with promptitude every attempt to disturb our internal tranquillity, and by maintaining inviolate that happy constitution which we inherit from our ancestors, on which the security and happiness of every class of my subjects essentially depend.”

His Majesty then withdrew.

Debate in the Lords on the Address of Thanks.] His Majesty's Speech having been read,

The Earl of *Glasgow* rose to move an Address of Thanks to his majesty for his most gracious Speech. In examining that Speech, and the public Declaration to all Europe by which it was preceded, it was clearly apparent that his majesty had all along been actuated by principles of justice and moderation. Those documents pointed out, in a much better way than he could do, the insidious conduct of the enemy throughout the whole of the war. This conduct left it no longer in his majesty's power to indulge his beneficent inclinations towards peace. His majesty, had, however, lost no opportunity of proving the pacific intentions by which he had always been actuated. On every occasion that presented itself, he had renewed his attempts to restore the blessings of peace. In pursuit of this desirable object, he had gone as far as was compatible with

the safety of his people, and the dignity of his crown. From a review of the overtures for peace, it was obvious that the prolongation of the war was to be attributed solely to the ambition of France. What was the avowed state of the negotiation so lately terminated? The enemy required a restitution of all the conquests made by the valour of our arms; and this not as the price of peace but of negotiation. What was the relative situation of the contending parties, when this arrogant pretension was advanced? Was it in a moment of humiliation, defeat and disgrace, that the enemy dared to bring forward their insolent demands? No; it was in the full career of conquest that these propositions were advanced. Their fleet was perfectly annihilated. We never had been successful on any occasion in the commencement of hostilities, and this ought to encourage our continuance, especially as the late splendid victory of lord Duncan showed what our navy, under discipline and wise management, could accomplish. And it was at the same time a pledge of certain prosperity always accompanying a dignified perseverance in the use of the means with which Providence had endowed us. He was decidedly of opinion, that the conduct of ministers was politic and wise, and such as would best conduce to a safe and honourable peace. His lordship concluded with moving the following Address:

“ Most gracious Sovereign;

“ We, your majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects the Lords spiritual and temporal, in parliament assembled, beg leave to return your majesty our humble thanks for your majesty's most gracious speech from the throne; and to express to your majesty the just sense which we entertain of your majesty's paternal anxiety for the welfare of your subjects, manifested in the earnest desire expressed by your majesty for the restoration of peace on secure and honourable terms.

“ We return your majesty our humble thanks for the communications which you have directed to be laid before us; and we assure your majesty, that we shall proceed, without delay, to the consideration of those measures which the circumstances of the present crisis require; and that, while we participate with your majesty in the concern which your majesty feels at the failure of your earnest endeavours to procure for your people the blessings of peace, we are fully confident, from

the uniform tenour of your majesty's conduct, that every step has been taken by your majesty which could tend to accelerate that object; and that it is to the unwarrantable pretensions and inordinate ambition of the enemy, and, above all, to their inveterate animosity against these kingdoms, that the long delay and final rupture of the negotiation are to be ascribed.

"We entreat your majesty to believe that, impressed as we are with the necessity and the magnitude of the contest in which we are engaged, as well as of the value of the interests which we have at stake, no exertions will be wanting on our part to enable your majesty to prosecute the war with vigour, until a more just and pacific spirit shall prevail on the part of the enemy; and to employ, in the defence of every thing that is dearest to us, those means and resources which the present situation of our country holds out.

"We assure your majesty that we reflect with peculiar satisfaction on the public spirit which has been displayed by your majesty's subjects, and on the conduct by which your majesty's troops, of every description, have acquired fresh claims to our esteem and admiration.

"We are particularly desirous of embracing the earliest opportunity to offer to your majesty our warm and heartfelt congratulations on that signal and decisive victory which has crowned the series of splendid successes obtained by your majesty's fleets over all our different enemies in the course of the present war; a victory no less important in its consequences, than glorious in the circumstances by which it is distinguished.

"We are deeply sensible of the manner in which your majesty is pleased to express your gracious acceptance of our best endeavours to testify by our conduct our anxious regard for the interests of our country, and our invariable attachment to your majesty's person and government.

"Sensible of the blessings which, under your majesty's paternal care, are derived to us from our civil and religious establishments, and which distinguish us from among all the nations of Europe; and persuaded that these blessings can only be preserved by inculcating and enforcing a due reverence and obedience to the laws, and by repressing with promptitude every attempt to disturb our internal tranquillity,—it shall be the first object of our attention to contribute, by every

means in our power, to the maintenance of that happy constitution which we inherit from our ancestors, and on which the security and happiness of every class of your majesty's subjects essentially depend."

Lord *Gwydir* said:—After the detailed account your lordships have read, in the Declaration which has been published; after the gracious Speech you have this day heard delivered from the throne, and the able manner in which the Address has been moved, it must certainly appear presumptuous in me, to offer myself to your lordship's notice; but at a moment like the present, I esteem it a duty I owe to your lordships, to the public, and to myself, to declare the principles which have hitherto governed my public conduct. I have supported this war from its commencement, because I thought it just and necessary. Every event of the war, every consequence that has followed, has served to confirm me in the opinion I first formed. It is from this conviction that I now call upon your lordships to support the Address which has just been moved.—The powers of language have been so often employed to describe the complicated nature of this war, that words have lost their effect by repetition; but the magnitude and importance of the objects it embraces remain the same. Three times have his majesty's ministers gone to the utmost verge that prudence and honour would permit, in the hope of being able to put an end to this unexampled contest, by negotiation and treaty. The result is well known; and I am at a loss to imagine a reason for your ambassador's having been received, unless it was to afford the Jacobin party in France an opportunity of adding insult to injury.—I have heard it stated from high authority, that a point of honour was almost the only rational cause for war. A dispute for trade, or territorial possession, might be easily compromised, might even be given up entirely, and the loss replaced from other resources: but the honour of this country once gone, its importance falls with it, and it would soon become the derision and contempt of mankind. Has the object of this war altered? Certainly not. The means of carrying it on have varied; but the preservation of the constitution and independence of Great Britain has, from its commencement, been our great pursuit. We have undoubtedly expended immense sums of money; we no longer appear to have the

same facility of commanding fresh supplies. Granted. But let it be remembered, that the comparative force of different countries must be judged of, in its relative as well as real sense. And I firmly believe that, notwithstanding the successes of France on the continent, her real physical resources and power against this country are infinitely more sunk, in proportion, than our own. Consequently, if we make the exertions which are called for, we make them with an increased prospect of success. The sole aim of the rulers of that country is universal dominion; and whether they have pursued it by war, or treaty, that object has never varied. With the words justice, good faith, and humanity in their mouths, they think no actions too atrocious to be committed. Indulging their minds in ideal victories over this country, they already consider you as a conquered enemy, and will listen to no terms, but such as they shall dictate. The laws they have made apply only to themselves; occasional possession creates of itself indefeasible right; but when this doctrine, as new as it is inadmissible, comes under discussion with their adversaries, it is exactly reversed as applied to them, and they instantly demand a previous unconditional restitution of every thing that has been taken, either from themselves or their pretended allies. Had these haughty terms been acceded to, our dishonour would have been sealed, but every chance of peace would have been farther removed. No negotiator could have thought even of proposing such terms, but with the view of forcing a continuance of the war. So much for the justice of their theory and practice! It would be a waste of your lordships' time, were I to comment on their good faith, either in the treaties they have dictated and broken, or the alliances they have formed and abused. But permit me to say, that from these treaties and these alliances, the rest of Europe would do well to take an example of what they have to expect. Had the allies continued true to their engagements, the war would, long ere this, have been brought to a happy conclusion. Far different has been the conduct of this country. The state of the funds, the pecuniary difficulties under which we have exerted and maintained our public credit, must convince our allies of the efforts we made to supply their wants. We have more than fulfilled every engagement; and in the negotiation we

proposed, their interests were combined with our own. Perhaps it was wise to learn by negotiation, to what extent the unjustifiable demands and insolent stipulations of the faction in France would go. Perhaps it was necessary to prove to this country that peace was impossible, in order to rouse that vigorous exertion which its honour and true interest equally demand. How long the rest of Europe may continue the short-sighted policy of keeping aloof from a contest in which all are so deeply concerned I know not. But in this momentous war, in which we are and must be embarked, and of which they are the inglorious and passive spectators, should the event prove destructive to this country, all the terms they have obtained, all the alliances they have formed, all the friendships they have courted, would, in a moment, crumble into dust; and the triumphant Jacobins, freed from the correcting power of Great Britain, would resume with safety, what, with apparent, though false moderation, they have hitherto given up.—Engaged as we are in a struggle for existence as a nation, what creates our difficulty but a question of finance? What but a reluctance to contribute a part of that wealth for our defence, the whole of which would soon be wrested from us, after a cowardly submission to an ignominious peace? Are our possessions ravaged? Are our armies defeated? Is our commerce destroyed? Or, are our fleets subdued? The answers to all these questions are as consolatory as they are obvious. On the splendour of our naval victories, separately and repeatedly gained over the fleets of France, Spain, and Holland, I shall not presume to enlarge. They are above all praise; and I trust the admiration and gratitude of the nation, will, if possible, keep pace with the advantages and honour so gloriously obtained.—The government of France has at least the merit of proclaiming its intentions. It is determined utterly to overthrow your system. It considers England as the great magazine of the riches of the world, which it is determined to plunder and destroy. I contend you have nothing to fear from being conquered, that you have not equally to dread from a base surrender. The terms on which they offer to accept your surrender (for in no other sense will they consent to treat), must lay you completely at their feet. When at their mercy, could the most sanguine friend of their power expect better treat-

ment than their own subjects; and I would ask your lordships, if death is not preferable to life under such rulers? An extreme desire to put an end to the miseries of war, induced his majesty's ministers to go every length that prudence and honour permitted, (nay perhaps farther), to terminate those miseries by negotiation. But after the reception those advances have met with, the nation would be regardless of its dignity, it would be careless of the high opinion in which it now stands with the rest of Europe; it would be disgraced in the eyes of the whole world, if it hesitated a moment in resenting the insult and accepting the challenge. It would be a strange return for all the blood that has been spilt, and all the valour which has been shown by our fleets and armies, if we were basely to surrender the fruits of so many victories, instead of seconding their efforts by the same inflexible steadiness in our councils which they have constantly manifested on every service they have undertaken. The wild fury of your old and inveterate enemies has spoken in a manner too plain to be misunderstood. They offer no other alternative but unconditional submission to their will, or fierce and bloody contest with their power. When have they, by their successes against this country, established a right to hold such insolent language?—Here, then, we are forced to make our stand. In retreat there is no safety. The most mortifying submission, the most important sacrifices, would only serve (as baseness and fear always must serve) to increase the insolence of your relentless foe. Are we, then, to wage eternal war? In fair argument, no man has a right to put this extreme case. The events of the war will, I hope, soon decide that question. It is sufficient evil for the day, if it be proved that peace cannot be obtained. With the present Directory a wish for peace with this country constitutes a crime of the deepest dye. Those who in France, supported by public opinion, wished for peace on fair and honourable terms, have been seized and transported like criminals, with a cruelty unrecorded in history; and with them all appearance of justice and liberty have vanished also. The Jacobin despotism is now at its height. Let the powers of Europe, which still retain their independence, look well to its explosion. Much as I lament the horrors of war—and no man can more than I do—I am convinced there is no

road to peace but that which must be opened by the power of the sword. To secure the permanent happiness and prosperity of this country, all temporary sacrifices are as nothing. I trust a plan will be brought forward for raising the supplies equal to meet all our difficulties. I am far from endeavouring to keep out of sight those temporary inconveniences which all must feel, more or less, and some to a very severe degree, but they are inconveniences which we must endure to prevent more serious evils, and will, no doubt, be borne with cheerfulness by every true lover of his country. Under Providence our safety is in our own hands. I trust there will be no half measures, but that by boldly looking at our situation, we shall find our spirits and resources adequate to the wants of the nation and the importance of the crisis.

Earl Fitzwilliam said, he fully concurred with the sentiments of the noble earl who moved the address, and the noble lord who seconded it, as to the danger and difficulty of the crisis, and the necessity of pursuing the war with vigour, but there were words in the address to which he could not agree, because he conceived they evidently tended to weaken the principle upon which that House might, as the address stated, wish to come forward with their support of his majesty; having premised this, his lordship said, his concurrence with the address should not be withheld, provided a trivial alteration in a few words was admitted. In every other respect his sentiments were in unison with the noble lord who had just sit down; and their lordships would do him the justice to believe, that his sentiments had, from the commencement of the war, never once varied. The object on its first appearance struck him precisely as it ever had done since. Its aspect had been uniform. Whatever shape it assumed, to whatever point it tended, the principle was the same, compounded of the same ingredients, and in every direction productive of the same effects. To every word, therefore, in the Speech, in the Address, and in the Declaration, which aims at the most distant connexion with a system thus hostile to both happiness and human comfort, he was determined to give his decided negative. Nor would he ever lend his sanction to the opening and carrying on negotiations with a power so anomalous, so dangerous to the safety of Europe, as the French republic. What

terms could be made with a government between which and ourselves there were no common principles? They had no medium of access to the views and wishes of each other. Nor was it proper they should. He lamented that any attempts at negotiation with a power, constituted as the French republic was, had ever been made. Every effort to that effect had not only proved nugatory, but productive of greater difficulty and danger. When his majesty had unfortunately been advised to come down to that House, two sessions since, and make a declaration that the French republic was then in a state capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other nations, he had felt no inconsiderable share of pain, conscious that no state of France but a restored monarchy, could render it capable of existence with safety to the other powers of Europe. Such had been at one time maintained to be the principle of the war, and so declared from the highest authority. His majesty's declaration therefore, two years ago, appeared to him to have been extremely injudicious, and he verily believed its consequences had fatally contributed to the continuance of the war, under circumstances disadvantageous to Great Britain, as it engendered distrust among the allies, and weakened the energy of the coalesced powers, and of the grand alliance. He would add, that he verily believed the fruit of that declaration had been the treaty of Udina. Let their lordships for a moment reflect on the different principles of the two countries, and they would see how impossible it was for Great Britain to make a secure peace with the French republic. What was the object of their government and ours? the same lust of universal empire which poisoned and debased their old establishment, seemed the only principle which distinguished the new. Was it necessary to trace their revolutionary progress? In what stage of it was not this characteristic feature most prominent? Look at all their views, their conquests, their intrigues, and their negotiations. Had they any other end or aim than the aggrandizement of France? How were the relations of peace and amity to be obtained or established between nations thus at variance in pretensions and spirit, in views and means, in what they would have and what they would be? The detail of the transactions marked their Jacobinical march over all the mounds

of good order and political subordination. It might have been expected, after they had abolished monarchy in all its parts and branches, and had fenced themselves in their usurpation with their decrees, their armies, and their tribunals, that they would have desisted from troubling their neighbours. But was it not evident that their original purpose was as strong and as extensive in its operation as ever in their very last actions? However they had disguised their intentions to their new friends, a very short time had brought them into light. Let their lordships recollect the many fine speeches upon liberty and equality with which Holland and all its dependencies had been amused. Had not all these, more or less, been falsified? And was there a people this day on earth in greater slavery than those infatuated states to their new masters? Had they not found how ill exchanged our connexion was for that of these republicans? By what were they gainers? How preposterous was it to think of acquiring independence from those who, after despoiling their own countrymen of their rights, issued forth the destroyers of whatever belonged to our common nature. And had it not been the same with all the allies they had been able to make? Nay, not only to their allies, but to those who were not their enemies, they had manifested the most oppressive tyranny, and the most glaring injustice. Let their lordships recollect their conduct to Avignon, and Avignon certainly was not their enemy: neither did Geneva stand in that situation. The strict and cautious neutrality which Venice observed, the complaisance of Genoa for the French government, were unable to protect them from the rage of Jacobin proselytism. They had fallen victims to the pusillanimity, or to the prudence with which they had acted. But it might be said, that here a victorious army had interfered, and in the exultation of victory had effected changes which might not have arisen from the general politics of the French government. The unexampled atrocities, however, the unjustifiable interference with the little state of Geneva, were the deliberate effects of their desolating and revolutionary system; for the revolution in Geneva originated from the house of the French minister. Their treatment of the Italian states also, and their conduct to America in particular, proved what their aim and object were. Neutral and friendly

powers had been deprived of their rights by Buonaparté, on no other pretence than the convenience and advantage of the French republic. That man would not even condescend to colour or disguise his motives under a plausible or specious pretext. Disorganization in all its extent had uniformly succeeded every establishment they had been able to overthrow. They had indeed but one character, which had discriminated them at the beginning, and had never since changed, and in all probability never would. It was their own incommunicable prerogative—an incompatibility of coalescing with any other power whatever. In all their treaties this accordingly was the paramount article. It was for the privilege of regenerating the constitutions of other nations, and proselyting the subjects of other states, that they threw away all their old forms of every quality and complexion, for the substitution of an arrangement perfectly new, unknown, and untried; that they burst upon all the states in their vicinity, and convulsed them with their enthusiasm; and that wherever they penetrated by art or arms, the revolutionary mania followed them in all its effects. From which of the most uncultivated wilds, in the most barbarous countries, did ever swarms of such banditti issue as had issued from the cultivated empire of France, and overspread the surrounding kingdoms with madness and guilt? And was this the people with whom their lordships were ready to make engagements? The character and tempers of their rulers evinced what we had to expect from their warmest professions. These were probably formed on the spirit of the people, and within these two months had presented to every humane and considerate mind a most dreadful picture of hypocritical affectation and usurped extravagance, the cant of liberty and the horror of despotism. Were not their late proscription of no less than sixty-five deputies, and the entire disfranchisement of fifty-three departments, for whose representation they had arbitrarily and openly sent creatures of their own to the council of five-hundred, instances of this predominating lawless propensity? In fact, the councils were not the representatives of the people, but of the Directory, and this false and pretended representation of the nation, was even extended to the subordinate municipal officers. How much had they exposed their absurd conceptions of popular representation! Of

this primary principle in modern democracy, how much had they not boasted, but in what instance had it been realized? Was the expulsion of such a number of those, legally chosen by their constituents, and authorized to represent them in the great national council, meant to exemplify their doctrine or to explain it? Did the equality they originally proposed consist of such outrages on the rights and feelings of each other? And had we any reason whatever to expect better usage than was mutually adopted among themselves?—Here, therefore, he was pledged to their lordships and the public to make no peace where peace was impracticable; where it could neither be honourable nor lasting; where the party we closed with only closed the more effectually to break on the first occasion that offered; and either prove perfidious friends or implacable enemies. Their lordships would of course have to consider, whether it was better to prosecute the war on the original ground of it, or, by putting an end to the one, basely to relinquish the other. No one who seriously considered the matter could be at a loss to make his election. Let us persevere in the course we have commenced, and our efforts must be crowned with success. The machinery was in motion which must eventually prevail. It was true, the war had cost the country many millions, but the taxes were paid, our resources were rising, trade was increased, and commerce flourishing. It was also true, that the public burthens bore more heavily on some ranks of people, than every humane man could wish, but that was not to be taken as a proof that our resources were nearly exhausted, and he believed the spirit of the people to support so necessary a war, might still be relied on. All the world was satisfied of the responsibility of our funds, of their competency to all our exigencies, of their readiness on every emergency. Let our resources be compared with those of our adversaries. They were in fact, without any resource. All they had yet done, all the armies they had raised, all the magazines they had filled, and all the treasures they had expended, had been effected, not by any established arrangement of finance, not by any system of efficient taxation, but by an indiscriminate application of the power they had usurped, to make the property of individuals answerable to the exigency of the state. This general appropriation of wealth, might do for

once, but it could not be a permanent resource. And nothing proved their weakness more decidedly than their carrying on the public business by private property. It was blowing up the mine instead of working and carrying the ore to be purified, refined, and coined. But now, how was it with our revenue? Let them hold in mind the facility with which the loans of the year were negotiated. More money was offered to government than the minister had occasion for; and any sum might have been obtained to carry on a war, which the people felt to be just and necessary. In fact, all its sources had rather improved than diminished since the war. Our commerce was actually increased beyond all expectation. Where were not our manufactures exported? In what sea was not the British navy triumphant? The Spanish, the French, and the Dutch fleets had successively acknowledged the superiority of our flag. And were all these instances of our glory to be surrendered for the amity of a government incapable of accepting, cementing, or realizing it. What should we gain by this heterogeneous connexion? Were their lordships in hopes of better treatment than any of their other allies of the French? Had they not subverted the order pre-established in all the connexions they had formed? And would they reverence ours any longer than it was in their power to trample it under their feet? By what means could we deter them from this outrage, or bind them to regard as sacred among us what they had abolished among themselves? It has always been his opinion, that had our allies proved true to each other, had they been animated with as much zeal to defend, as the French to attack, the whole fabric of regular society, the war had been happily terminated long ago. But the eccentricities we had to repel had never been fairly met. We had ruined the cause we wished to protect by our own mismanagement, by want of magnanimity, by mutual jealousy, and inattention to the common spirit and principle which ought to have animated and knit us together in one heart and one aim. The desertion of one led the way to that of another. But though left in the field alone, we occupied such vantage ground as would enable us for a long time to come to hold them in perfect defiance. Was not the Emperor a beacon to the people of this country. He whose indispensable duty it was to have preserved

the empire from the dreadful inundation to which it was now exposed by his new allies; who had so many reasons for resisting the torrent that had so long threatened to overflow his dominions; instead of proving himself the father of his people, was actually, by the ascendancy of the French in his councils, become a Jacobin, and their tool to jacobinise his subjects. This was his fate, and the fate of all who had suffered themselves to be the victims of this new policy. The king of Prussia might also turn Jacobin, and fall in with the extravagant schemes of this ambitious republic, which already called out for a Transrhenane republic, on the very borders of the dominions of Austria and Prussia. In proportion as we regarded with veneration and patriotism our valuable liberties, as transmitted to us by our ancestors, we should resist all coalescence with this regicide government. Had not the object, as advanced by his majesty in a former speech, that we fought for order, morality, and religion, the same value in our estimation, and the same claim on our exertion as ever? Their lordships knew how sacred these ought to be to us all, and what influence they were calculated to maintain in their individual and relative state. And for what, by pressing a negotiation, would their lordships exchange them? It merited deep and mature consideration, whether it became a great and free people to part with order, morality, and religion, for every species and degree of confusion, mutual depredation, and Atheism. These were the sentiments in which it had been his lot to contemplate the progress of these new-fangled principles. And it was now as much as ever his steadfast opinion, that, consistently with our national dignity, with our constitution, with the love we owed our country, our children, and our posterity, we could not agree to conditions of peace and amity with France until the old monarchy was restored, and an hereditary sovereign re-instated on the throne of his ancestors. He concluded with moving, That the words in the Address which implied an approbation of the steps which his majesty had been advised to take to restore peace with the French government be omitted.

Lord Grenville said:—In presenting myself to your lordships immediately after the noble earl who has thought it right, I am sure with the best intentions, to move for leaving out a part of the address, I by no

means intend to offer any sentiments in opposition to the doctrines he has thrown out, with respect to the conduct of the French, and to the effect of their principles on the fate of Europe. On the contrary I agree with the noble earl in the idea that there is no safety for any people by being at peace with the French; for the dreadful picture which he has drawn of the horrible nature of their friendship, is justified by the history of the nations which they have ruined; but I carry my opinion much farther than the noble earl as I think that these calamities not merely flowed from their peace with France, but happened to them totally altogether on that account. In my opinion, the only safety to be obtained under such a system, is by an honourable peace or vigorous war. It is not by compromising, however humble; it is not by sacrifices, however extravagant, that security can be obtained against such a system. It is only by a vigorous resistance of their principles, a manly disregard of their threats, and a zealous maintenance of our own principles, that we can secure to ourselves the blessings of our established government. But acting on these ideas, and trusting to our own genuine vigour, I differ from the noble earl as to the inference he has drawn from the detail he has so well made, that this country never can with safety make peace with the French republic. At no time have I ever adopted such an opinion, but have studiously avoided encouraging the idea. I see the conduct of the French towards other nations with as little satisfaction as the noble earl, but I believe that even with the French republic, as now constituted, peace may be both practicable and permanent. It may be obtained, in my mind, upon conditions consistent with the honour and safety of the empire. But I perfectly agree with the noble earl, that we can look for no safety by following the conduct of those powers that have sought it in ignominious submission. It is not by sacrifices of principle, it is not by acquiescence, it is not by yielding point after point, but by a regular, temperate, and firm maintenance of our just rights and dignity, that we can secure ourselves against the peril of the torrent of French inundation. His majesty's servants have in no degree varied from the words of the declaration to which the noble earl alluded. At no time since the commencement of the war have his majesty's ministers declared, that no peace could or

ought to be made with the republic. All that they asserted in that declaration to which the noble earl has alluded, and which is farther proved by the whole tenor of the conduct which his majesty has been advised to hold is, that they thought peace was more likely to be permanent if France should happily return to a regular government, and that of all forms that of a restored monarchy was most likely to afford security and repose to the other states of Europe. We are eager only to secure to this country peace upon conditions which shall be independent of any existing order of things in France; and however we may have preferred one kind of government to another, we have never made any particular government a *sine qua non* of negotiation. I rejoice in the unanimity which is likely to prevail this day. At no moment was the unanimous declaration of a determined spirit to support his majesty in the measures essential to national prosperity, more incumbent upon us than at present. If the address could be made more decisive upon this point, by leaving out the words to which the noble earl objects, I would be the first to agree in the amendment to that purpose. I trust it is the object of us all explicitly to declare, that we will never compromise nor surrender the just claims of England, that we will never seek for peace by sacrifices that are inconsistent with our true safety. But not thinking that the spirit of the declaration is weakened by manifesting a desire for peace upon honourable and just principles, I must object to the amendment.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* said:—My lords, I do not rise to offer my feeble opposition to the Address that has been proposed. I know how vain it would be for me to flatter myself, that any thing which I can offer would avail in this most perilous moment. When I see the House deserted by those noble peers whose just influence is supported by great ability and by powerful eloquence, I cannot hope that any thing coming from abilities like mine can have weight with you; but my lords, though I have long meditated the doing that which others have done, though it would have best suited my own inclination and temper of mind to have followed their example, and though I have ever borne in mind the saying which I once heard from a very wise man, that there ought to be an interval between life and death in which men ought to retire

from bustle and business, reflect upon their past life, and enjoy their ease and independence. I did not like to take one important step before I knew what step is to follow it; and therefore conscious as I am that other noble lords, who are absent, would express the same idea with more force and greater ability, I think it more manly, and more fair, for every man to offer his opinion at a crisis like the present. On this occasion I have the misfortune, I am afraid, to stand single; but, however weak my voice, however feeble my talents, I conceive it to be my duty to exert them in the way which I think may the best conduce to the object which I have in view, that of arresting you in a career that leads to death. Brought as we are to the brink of a most dreadful precipice, which noble lords have so justly deplored, I think it right, single as I am, to raise my warning voice, and to save you, if possible, from the abyss. The absence of the noble lords, though it has not surprised me, afflicts my heart: I am not surprised, my lords, because I do not know whether it is not even a wise, a salutary, and a patriotic measure: far be it from me to arraign them; it is a measure upon which I have often contemplated with seriousness, and which I have more than once thought of adopting. For what, my lords, avails it for a few men, unsupported by public opinion, to spend their breath here against a system which is not to be assailed by wisdom nor moved by patriotism; which reposes itself on other bases than discussion, experience, and truth? I have no doubt, therefore, but that these noble persons have declined their attendance upon considerations, strong and weighty, upon principles of conscience and rectitude, and that their absence may do more to awaken you to seriousness and to reflexion, than all they could have done by fine harangues and by declamation, however lofty and however impressive.—My lords, if I come down thus single, it is not from any motive of self-conceit, but because I think the times demand from every man exertion in every way in which it is possible. It is this, my lords, that induces me yet to trouble you with my faint, perhaps my unavailing voice. The Declaration, and what a declaration! has made a most serious impression upon me; unaccompanied as it is with the documents, I read it with a perfect confidence in the main facts which it states. If one quarter of those facts be

true, what do they prove? That the French Directory have no intention to make peace with you; that they are alienated in mind and implacably hostile to the government of this country! My lords, this is a most serious matter; for then comes the great question, What are we to do in such a predicament? The noble earl says, continue the war? I ask, how are you to continue it? I leave all that has been said about Geneva and Genoa, and the other states who have suffered from the conduct of France, to men better acquainted with the circumstances. We have nothing to do with these details. Great Britain is not to be put on a footing with the petty states which the drunkenness of the French revolution has disturbed. I leave such references along with all the predictions about the impossibility of the French continuing their system, which have so long and so fatally deluded your lordships. We are come now to that point, when we are doomed to act by ourselves; and I need not tell your lordships, that through the whole of this business it has been the invariable principle of those who have carried on the war, that we could not make any effectual impression on France without a continental ally. If this be true, what shall we now do when the French have made a Jacobin of the Emperor? Can we go on without an ally, for any purpose of offence? We cannot hope to recover the king of Prussia as an ally. He may become a Jacobin likewise: there is little chance of rekindling in his breast the flame of romance that has now burned in us for five years; he long ago had the wisdom to quit the scene, and now we find that even the Emperor has withdrawn. I hope, however, that we shall find him a man of honour in his engagements, and that the money which was advanced in this country, which our ministers have constantly declared was not a subsidy but a solemn loan, will be paid with punctuality and honour. The surmises that I have heard, I must therefore disregard.—But, my lords, what I in particular desire to press on your consideration is, that you are now called upon to persevere in this contest, without the means which have so frequently been stated as essential to its success. It is for your lordships to stop and inquire with what wisdom you are now to open this new career? The noble lord says, that our means are flourishing, in consequence of our in-

creased trade. Are they so? Is the noble lord furnished with authentic documents of this fact? The papers that I have read respecting the state of the trade with Portugal, and the wine trade, gave proofs of a lamentable decay.—It is not then, because our sailors have conquered, and because we have most gloriously demonstrated to all the world the character of our natural strength, that therefore we are provided with the means of carrying on an offensive war against France without a continental ally. Our sailors indeed, have maintained the glory of our maritime empire; they have shown that the heart and soul of the country can rise, in spite of the neglect, mismanagement, and mistakes of ministers, like the natural strength of youth, which, in a casual sickness, resists all the blunders of the physician; but great and glorious as our naval exploits have been, what can they do for us in such a contest? They make us masters of the sea indeed; but where shall we land? We have the seas of Europe, and France has its ports. It is necessary to the circuit of commerce, that not merely the seas should be open, but the markets. What, then, is our relative situation? We have ships that traverse and command the ocean; the French have armies that traverse and command the shores. We can ship our manufactures, but where shall we land them or expose them to sale? What sea is there between Paris and Hamburgh, or Paris and Hanover, or Paris and Lisbon? The French occupy, and they will occupy, every point of contact with the main land of Europe. A Duncan and a St. Vincent may sweep them from the seas, and achieve for their country and their own names immortal honour; but what will all this avail us towards offensive war? Are we to have new revolutions; are we to look to new schemes of descent; are we so little chastised in the school of adversity as yet to cherish the hopes of invasion of France? How are we to do it? Is it by balloons? I have heard of no recent invention which is honoured with the approbation of the war office for the conquest of France. But, my lords, do we yet talk of a counter-revolution after all the experience that we have had; are we yet weak enough to cherish this puerile expectation? If you are, I refer your lordships to a most able pamphlet written by a late comptroller general of France. The authority of this writer, speaking

against his inclination and contrary to his wishes, ought to have weight. He states admirably the situation into which you have driven France; and he exposes and ridicules the nonsense with which we have been so long deluded about their inability to continue the struggle—all the nonsense about assignats and mandates, with which I have been so often bored, and my ears stunned in this House. M. de Calonne says, with truth, that all our driving produced the contrary effect to what we intended; that it is quite ridiculous to talk about the property of a nation where all its property is afloat. Its very paper, which we idly looked up to as the pregnant source of its ruin, was not merely a genuine source for the time that it lasted, but, by our attacks upon it, it became the principle of salvation to France. It worked out its own cure; and France, from having more paper than all the world put together, has now less than this country. Such is the declaration of this ingenious man. My lords, I am not come here to give my opinion in the spirit of a Frenchman. I am no Frenchman. I am no Jacobin. But in this most dreadful crisis, if I could suggest any means that might tend to correct the folly of our system and to check the fatality of our career, I should feel it my duty to do so. I profess to God I know but one means and one chance for safety. I see but one powerful resource left to the nation, and it is, a change of ministers. I yet have confidence that this resource will be tried. His majesty has now reigned over us thirty-seven years; no man has a greater knowledge of the character of the people of England than his majesty. In the chief magistrate of such a government as ours, it is not great talents that are required so much as that plain integrity and humane attention to the good of his people, which rejects all considerations of a personal kind, and seeks only for their happiness and safety. In this view I cannot despair of the public weal, since, if his majesty will enter into the serious inquiry of the most likely means to restore to his kingdoms the blessings of peace, he must see, that a change of his ministers is the most likely means of accomplishing that desirable object. If I am asked upon what basis a peace ought to be concluded, I can only say, that provided it is concluded in the spirit of peace, and a total abandonment of every idea of promoting internal insurrection in France, I would

not be very anxious to specify the conditions. I do not think mere colonies either East Indian or West Indian, a sufficient argument for the continuance of war—not even Trincomale itself. As to our West India settlements, the events that have recently happened, have materially changed our policy with regard to them. When we enjoyed all their consumption it was very different; but since that is in a great measure transferred to the Americans, who will one day take the West India Islands to themselves, and when humanity has done so much towards the emancipation of the negro slaves; and the French revolution has introduced the principles of insubordination into those islands. I would not contend for a single day about any object in the West Indies. The value of those colonies is very much lessened to England. As to the Cape of Good Hope, about which so many lofty expectations were formed, on that also our ideas are corrected; the whole is found to be a dream. I have reason to know, that the men who are the most ardent in their expectations about the Cape, are now convinced that it would be not only useless but inconvenient to keep it. The whole, then, is reduced to Trincomale; and though I own that Trincomale is of enormous value to the defence of our East Indian empire, and that it is a thing which we ought to negotiate for, and to get, if we can; yet it surely is not worth the continuance of a war. We gained our empire in the East without Trincomale; we have taken Trincomale before now, and given it up; and I am not for incurring another campaign that will cost us thirty millions, for the sake of this settlement. This is my opinion, and I throw it out without hesitation. Let us come to our senses. Let us engage such of the other European powers as we can prevail on, in a defensive league. Our system ought to be purely defensive. Let us, above all, regain the opinion of Europe; we have lost it by our intemperance, our pride, and our rapacity. Let us proclaim freedom to neutral nations? we shall be forced to do it, and that with an ill grace; the present is the moment favourable to conciliation. If thus we recognize the commercial freedom of the world, we shall be the first to profit from the grand and generous system. Our means for a defensive system, are indeed large. Our nautical skill, and our nautical capital, if I may be al-

lowed the phrase, would maintain to us the true sovereignty of the seas; for they would secure to us the empire of its commerce. To this I would suggest the important duty of a thorough examination of our expenses through all their details; and of our abuses through all their gradations. There are other things that must enter into this plan. We have not merely Europe to conciliate; we have also to conciliate at home; we must satisfy the minds of the people. I need not tell you, that parts of this empire are convulsed to the heart; you will naturally feel that I turn my eye to the state of Ireland, from which all public information is barred. But you must not shut your minds against it, it presses too forcibly upon you for resistance. I have seen letters from a noble person, worthy of the highest consideration, which give this emphatical description of the present state of Ireland:—"Ireland is quiet indeed; but it is the quiet which reigns on board a tender under the management of a press-gang." I have seen also a letter in an evening print, the *Courier*, which gives such a description of the horrors that reign in Ireland, as, if true, instantly call for redress. I am convinced that, if this subject be not immediately taken up, we shall have but one alternative, a feudal union or a separation. My lords, the case is imminent. I speak not as a party man on the subject; secure to me my property and my quiet. The people who are to be governed have a right to both; and I see no means of restoring them, but by making peace with that mighty people, who, to the enthusiasm of liberty, have all the resources of a nation yet before them. They are not exhausted as we are; they have not run through all the classes of taxation; the combat is unequal, and I dread the event. Peace is necessary to our deliverance; by that we may lessen our expenses. So long as the war lasts, the enemy is the arbiter of your expense; but by a well-constructed and a solid peace, you may pave the way for the amelioration of your internal state. You may satisfy the people that their representation is substantial and efficacious to its purpose, not by holding out the nonsense of universal suffrage, a thing which no man who uses the term has ever been able justly to define, much less to reconcile with common sense and practice; but to satisfy them by gradual reforms, growing out of the constitution itself. I say gradual reforms; for God for-

bid that any other but gradual reform should ever be countenanced in England! My lords, I have done. I had some intention of putting some words into the shape of an amendment, but I knew it was useless. I see no good that can be obtained in that way. I have now, for forty years, seen the fate of them in the two Houses of Parliament. I look to another quarter for our remedy. We have a prince of experience on the throne. He has friends who are capable of giving him sound and serious advice. It is perhaps come to the critical minute, when acting on their counsel, he may yet rescue us from the fate that impends over our heads. God grant that we may owe to his paternal care the national safety!

Lord *Mulgrave* admitted the difficulty of the crisis to be as great as the noble marquis had described it to be, but felt none of those gloomy apprehensions as to the safety of the country, which the noble marquis had taken such pains to impress on the minds of their lordships. The noble marquis had informed the House, that he stood single that day. He hoped and believed that he did stand single in the opinions which he delivered, and that no individual, either within or without those doors, thought with him on the subject. The noble marquis had said, if noble lords who were absent had been in the House, they would have delivered the same sentiments with better ability and greater effect. The plain inference from which assertion was, that those noble peers who were absent entertained the same opinions, a fact which, with great deference to the noble marquis, he must beg leave to doubt. He did not think it probable, that any noble lord could have ventured an assertion, so questionable, as that Great Britain could not make a powerful struggle against France without an ally. He should be sorry, indeed, if the fact were so; had they changed their opinion of British courage; had they changed their opinion of British resources of all kind? They must do so before they could come to a conclusion, that we could not carry on a war without an ally. If there was any one power without whose alliance we could not carry on this war, then, indeed, we were to be considered as the vassals of that power. He was glad, however, that this was not the case. The noble marquis had asked, where we were to carry on our commerce? He would ask the noble marquis, was there

an internal navigation from France to the West Indies? Was there a high road through France to the East Indies? Could we not go to South America without the assistance of an ally? He believed the distresses of the French would soon compel them to listen to us. He admitted that if peace could be obtained by a change of ministers, they ought to be changed immediately, whatever merits they possessed. He was so fully persuaded of this, that highly as he thought of them, he would himself move for their dismissal, if he thought that such an event would procure a peace. But that desirable consequence, he was assured, would not follow that change. Supposing it to take place to-morrow, who was to succeed them? The noble marquis undoubtedly had talents that well qualified him for the situation of a minister; but who would place confidence in him, as a negociator for peace, after his speech of that evening? He thought that we must carry on the war, and that there was no utility in removing the ministers. He thought also much too highly of the various resources which we possessed, to suppose that we should sink under our present difficulties.

The Duke of *Norfolk* said, he entirely approved of the conduct of those noble lords, who had absented themselves from the House, and should have followed their example had not his hereditary situation rendered his presence indispensable.

Earl Fitzwilliam's motion was negatived. After which, the Address was agreed to.

Protest against the Rejection of Earl Fitzwilliam's Amendment to the Address.] The following Protest was entered on the Journals:

Dissentient,

1. "Because the amendment which has been rejected, appeared to me necessary to save the honour of this House from being implicated in approving a negotiation, of which we know little more than that it has drawn down new calamities and indignities, new injuries and outrages on his majesty and his people. Of these, indeed, too much is already known. His majesty has been advised to set forth a detailed account of them to France, to Europe, and to the world, as if the late abrupt conclusion of the negotiation by the French Directory, and the insulting dismissal of our ambassador were not the notorious and immediate consequence

of the public voice of France having been overruled by force and terror, and as if all Europe (however in great part subdued also by force and terror) and America, the only part of the world out of Europe, which is directly connected with the system of Europe, were not too well acquainted before with the disposition and principles of the common enemy. On his side we are told, that there was a studied accumulation of every thing that could offend and irritate a high-minded people, such as the people of England once was; a wanton violation of all the mutually respectful forms which long usage has established in the intercourse of free nations, and a final demand (to which, from the moment of our first pacific overtures, that arrogant power has constantly recurred) of a direct surrender of our independence, by taking his laws and treaties for the basis of negotiation, and, indeed, for a preliminary to all discussion. On our side, it is avowed, that there was a departure from all the rules of common prudence, by disclosing all our objects before we could learn any one definitive pretension of the enemy, as the price of peace; and a patience, that it is too much to be feared, that France, Europe, and the world, to which it is declared, may mistake for pusillanimity. The circumstances which could warrant such a conduct, so contrary to all common policy, ought, indeed, to be weighty and grave, if not imperious and irresistible. Under our present circumstances, to take any step, which may seem, however distantly, to approve that conduct, can only tend to deceive his majesty's ministers as to the sentiments of this House, and induce still greater humiliation, which must terminate in ruin as well as in dishonour. No country can be safe which is not respected: no country can hope to be respected, that does not first respect itself.

2. "Because, having recorded my sentiments on the Journals of this House, when this train of measures was new, and the result of the first experiment yet in suspense, I have now the affliction of finding, that whatever I had apprehended from it, has been very much exceeded by its effects, in raising the insolence and audacity of the enemy, and in breaking down that spirit and energy of government, which can alone work out our safety in this awful juncture, or give dignity and glory to our fall.

3. "Because the sacrifices which his
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majesty has lately been advised to offer, and still to declare himself ready to make, cannot now have the same object, which the same or similar offers had on a former occasion. We were then anxious, by the cession of our own acquisitions, to redeem the most important part of the ancient established system of Europe, in which a breach had been made, and which was menaced with still greater danger. In different treaties of peace, sometimes England, sometimes France, sometimes other states, according to the circumstances of the juncture, have surrendered more or less of their actual conquests, for the purpose of restoring the general balance of power for the general safety. In such a peace, we should have had some apparent security, though slender indeed, against the ambition and principles of Republican France. But our last proposed sacrifices were offered merely to obtain peace. For that, and for that alone, we were prepared to give up possessions, which, under the laws of war, had become our own, whilst the enemy had invariably insisted on keeping every thing which his arms had conquered from the other great powers of Europe. Every thing that may be necessary to give rational security to an enemy, showing a true pacific disposition, would be well surrendered without any compensation; but a proposal to purchase peace, as a valuable consideration in itself, is a distinct admission of inferiority, or a proof of pusillanimity, never honourable, and therefore never safe to a great nation, especially in the face of an enemy, who measures all right by power and audacity; and against whom, it was admitted in debate by his majesty's ministers, 'that no security could be found in peace, without uncommon caution, and an uncommon degree of warlike preparation.' A treaty formed on this principle, may be complimented with the name of peace, but it will be in effect only a suspension of active hostility, without any of the advantages of peace, and subject to all the expenses and dangers of war.

4. "Because the whole conduct, as well as declarations of the enemy since the opening of the last session, had been particularly pointed against this country, so as to leave no rational ground of expecting any event from negotiation but that which has happened, of unavailing humiliation. The original treaty of France with America was most unjustly infringed, and avowedly, because the latter country would

not insist on our granting nominally to her, but really to France, exceptions and immunities derogating from the general maritime law respecting neutral nations. While no one word of conciliation was ever used towards us, our ally, the Emperor, was, by turns, menaced and caressed to induce him to listen to a separate peace; and in the very outset of our late negotiation, his majesty has declared that "Modes were insisted upon, the most inconsistent with the enemy's own conduct in every other instance." What has never yet been demanded by that insolent government from any other great state of Europe, was exacted from us, that we should become accessaries in violating all the ancient usages, invented and received, to guard the independency and dignity even of the weakest powers. No tolerably secure and honourable peace could have come, or ever can come, from a negotiation commenced and continued in that spirit.

5. "Because while his majesty persisted in a disposition to treat, and when he again offered in his public declaration to ratify the terms before proposed by him, the whole ground had failed on which alone his majesty had been induced on the 8th of December, 1795, to declare for the first time a desire of meeting any disposition which the enemy might manifest to negotiate a general peace, on just and suitable terms. That ground, as it was previously explained to us by his majesty's speech on the opening of that session, and, as all his majesty's ministers constantly argued in debate, was the establishment in France 'of an order of things compatible with the tranquillity of other countries, and affording a reasonable expectation of security and permanence in any treaty which might be concluded.' Such an order of things was benevolently hoped by his majesty to have been established in the third new constitution, made in the fourth year of the French republic. In the interim between our two negotiations, at Paris and Lisle, the first election, not immediately controlled by an armed force, came on under that constitution. The true voice of the majority of France was for the first time heard, and heard against the actual government of that wretched country. The armies were called in to stifle that voice. The principal leaders of the two legislative councils were seized and transported without any form of trial, a new

and unheard-of thing, even in the history of their injustice; nearly two-thirds of France were disfranchised; the press silenced; the clergy again proscribed, and the most arbitrary and ferocious measures threatened, as well as some absolutely taken, against all that remains of the nobility, gentry, and magistracy of the ancient monarchy. The power now established is notoriously the very same in character, in maxims, and conduct, as well as, for the most part, exercised or supported by the same men, with the government which existed at, and soon after the commencement of the war, and which was truly described in his majesty's Declaration of the 29th of October, 1793, as a 'state of things that could not exist in France without involving all the surrounding powers in one common danger, without giving them the right, without imposing it upon them as a duty, to stop the progress of an evil which existed only by the successive violation of all law and all property, and which attacked the fundamental principles by which mankind are united in the bonds of civil society.' It was against that government 'that his majesty then called on the people of France to join the standard of an hereditary monarchy,' 'in order to unite themselves once more under the empire of law, of morality, and religion;' the continuance of the same sort of government, changing never as to its fundamental principles, though fluctuating perpetually as to the persons of the usurpers, who occasionally tyrannize over the enslaved people, has confirmed me more than ever in my full assent to the wisdom of his majesty's Declaration then made.

6. "Because though the most absolute and over-ruling necessity could hardly palliate, much less justify, the sacrifice which the late negotiation would have made of our dignity, honour, and independence, together with our acquisitions, yet we have the satisfaction of knowing how, and when his majesty's ministers advised him in his Declaration to repeat his offer of peace, they also knew that nothing in any degree approaching to such necessity exists. The relative situation of this kingdom with regard to France is much improved since last year. We have lost nothing. We have gained something. The extension of the enemy's dominion under the name of protection, in the interior of Italy, gives him little additional

means of immediately annoying us. The marine of those allies, through whom alone he hoped to act against us, has been crippled by our glorious victories. We are secure from him, and he is left open to the undisputed superiority of our navy, to our attacks, if his majesty shall be advised to call forth the spirit and energy of his people, and to carry succour and assistance to the majority of that nation groaning under the tyranny of the usurpation, and manifesting on every occasion sentiments of disaffection and hostility towards the establishment, deceitfully and cruelly imposed on them as a mild and beneficent constitution. This is a state of things not the result of any speculation, but derived from the admission of the usurpers themselves. It is by them brought forward in their late declaration as their justification, and as the imperious and irresistible motive for violently disfranchising so large a majority of the nation of those rights and privileges upon which, as upon an unalterable basis, the pretended liberties of their republic were built and established. The pecuniary distress and embarrassments of the enemy have increased, so as to have been a pretence for some of the late violent proceedings in France, while, on the contrary, the inquiries of our committees have long since prepared the House to anticipate the pleasing assurance of his majesty, 'that we possess means and resources proportionate to the objects which are at stake, that our revenue has continued highly productive, our national industry has been extended, and our commerce has surpassed its former limits.'

(Signed)

"WENTWORTH FITZWILLIAM."

The King's Answer to the Lords' Address.]
To the Address of the Lords his majesty returned this answer:

"My Lords;—I thank you for this loyal, dutiful, and affectionate address. In a crisis of so much importance to the security and happiness of every class of my subjects, it is a great satisfaction to me to know that you entertain a just sense of the nature, magnitude, and necessity of the contest in which we are engaged; and that I may rely with confidence on your support in my fixed and unalterable determination to maintain to the utmost the laws, liberties, and religion of my people, and the dignity, honour, and independence, of my kingdoms."

Debate in the Commons on the Address of Thanks.] His Majesty's Speech having been read,

Mr. *Wilbraham Bootle* rose, to move an address of thanks. He said, he did it with the greater satisfaction, because he flattered himself, that though gentlemen might entertain some difference of opinion as to the original cause and subsequent management of the war, yet there could be but one opinion as to the necessity of prosecuting it, at a time when, unfortunately our enemies had left us no alternative. The restoration of tranquillity, and of uninterrupted commerce, were objects of as much importance to the sovereign as to the subjects of a commercial country. We could not, therefore, doubt the pleasure with which his majesty would have come to parliament, and have said, that he had delayed meeting them from time to time, under the well-founded hope of being able to lay before them an honourable treaty of peace; that he had met with an enemy equally desirous to enter upon that negotiation with such a disposition, as to make the discussion of terms a possible thing.—Very differently stands the case at present. His majesty might, indeed, have told us with truth, that, animated with the desire of tranquillizing Europe, he had again stepped forward in a manner which would have satisfied a reasonable enemy; but that all his offers had been received with contempt, and, after a long and fruitless attempt to bring the enemy to negotiation, his ambassador had been dismissed with insult. To all this he had submitted, with a view of proving to his subjects the sincerity of his wishes for peace.—In stating this, he was not describing, with half the indignation it deserved, the perverse conduct of the enemy. It did not appear to have been any question of terms, any resistance of aggrandisement on our part, but an inveterate resolution to preclude all negotiation whatever. Since the revolution of last September, the Executive Directory had taken no pains of concealing their intention of continuing hostilities: the arbitrary removal and expulsion of those who had opposed their measures, had enabled them to take off the mask, and to avow publicly that war with England was their system. That revolution had no sooner taken place, than they took the negotiation out of the hands to which it had been entrusted, and sent creatures of

their own to Lisle, charged with express orders to break off the negotiation, or, at least, to advance propositions which had been before rejected and abandoned, and which they well knew could never be accepted. It was evident that their intention was not to treat more advantageously for themselves, but to render all treaty impossible, to retract whatever the former situation of affairs in France had made them concede, to obliterate whatever hopes of reconciliation might have been before entertained, and to show that it was not this or that mode of peace, but peace itself, that they detested and disclaimed.—Satisfied as we must be, that no line of conduct on our part, however moderate and conciliating, could bring about the desired object, let us not show an inability or want of inclination to carry on the war; but let us declare to his majesty our determination of supporting him in the measures necessary for the good of this kingdom and the preservation of its constitution. Let us, by a manly declaration of our sentiments, show our enemies, that whatever divisions may have existed before, they had now united all Englishmen in one general feeling. We had to thank them for having removed all shadow of doubt as to their true intentions in regard to this country. We had to thank them for having united its inhabitants in one common cause. Let us, then, not give them any reason to hope that they may destroy this their Carthage, against which they have so repeatedly denounced vengeance. If we wanted any additional incitement to stand on our defence, we might add to the certainty of their hatred towards us, the consideration of the mode in which that hatred would operate. We may be assured, that it would not be to wrest from us our foreign possessions, to cripple our commerce, or to reduce our power; that this alone would not fill up the measure of their envy and detestation; but that their object would be to carry into execution their iniquitous and absurd plan of revolutionizing this country, and of forcing upon us the example of the defenceless states of Germany and Italy.—The choice was now before us. We might disband our armies, and our victorious navy, and oppose no resistance to the progress of an invading foe. We might give up to the absolute disposal of France our lives and properties, and be contented to rank ourselves in the number of her dependants.

We might own our submission to her ambitious projects. We might expect to see the throne, and the established laws of the realm, overturned and trampled under foot; and we might prepare the contributions which would be levied upon us to defray the expenses of our own ruin. All this we must be prepared to submit to, or we must resolve to continue the war.—As it must be evident that the restoration of peace could not be attained by any relaxation of efforts on our part, and as the continuance of the calamities of war, seemed for a time to be unavoidable, let us consider the situation in which we stand at present, with respect to the means of carrying it on. Every thing rested upon our own exertions. We were engaged in no continental war, nor depended upon the faith of other powers. We fought upon our own element, on a field of battle, where we had been long used to conquer and to consider ourselves as sole masters. We had swelled the list of our prizes to a degree unheard of in former wars. We had ruined the commerce, and crippled the navy of our enemies. We had kept possession of the sea against three formidable and allied powers. We had blocked up their ports, while superior fleets lay mouldering in inaction within them; and when, at last, the menaces and reproaches of their indignant countrymen had forced them reluctantly to battle, the result had invariably been what we had expected, and what they had dreaded. The glorious victories gained over the French and the Spaniards had long been the subject of public rejoicing and public gratitude. We had now added to these triumphs, another most signal and glorious victory—one, perhaps, of more real importance than any by which our arms had been hitherto signalized. We had humbled the pride and baffled the hostile designs of our enemies; and if they were mad enough to entertain a serious thought of invasion, we had taught them the folly and impracticability of the project. Among the innumerable good effects arising from this victory, it had tended to restore the confidence of the nation; it had shown the world, that though the spirits of British seamen might have been, for a time, directed to improper objects, and misled by the artifices of designing men, yet, when necessity required, and their duty called upon them for their exertions, that it would fall with ten-fold vengeance on the enemies of their country. He trusted

they should be unanimous in their vote of that day; and, under that hope he should move,

"That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House, for his most gracious Speech from the throne, and for the communication of the Declaration and the other Papers respecting the Negotiation with France, which his majesty has been graciously pleased to direct to be laid before us:

"To assure his majesty, that we shall not fail to apply ourselves with the utmost diligence and attention to the consideration of the measures which the present crisis requires; but we cannot refrain from expressing, at the earliest moment, our firm determination to afford his majesty the most effectual support in resisting every unwarrantable pretension, and checking every attempt dictated by inordinate ambition on the part of those with whom he has to contend:

"That we entertain a firm persuasion, that all his majesty's faithful subjects feel, as they ought, the value of the blessings which they are struggling to preserve, and will not fail, in every situation, to support his majesty, in defence of their essential interests, with the zeal, magnanimity, and courage, worthy of a great and free people:

"That we must, at the present moment, observe, with peculiar satisfaction, the proofs afforded of our means and internal resources, in the flourishing state of the revenue, industry, and commerce of the country:

"That we acknowledge, with the utmost gratitude, the sense which his majesty expresses of the public spirit which has been so eminently displayed by his people, and of the conduct of his troops of every description, which has justly entitled them to the additional esteem and admiration of their country; and we heartily congratulate his majesty on the signal and decisive victory with which providence has rewarded the exertions of his fleet under the command of admiral lord Duncan; an event which has crowned the repeated maritime successes obtained over all our enemies, and has indeed afforded a brilliant addition to the numerous and heroic exploits which, in the course of the present war, have raised to the highest pitch the naval glory of the country:

"It will afford us great satisfaction to

find that any branches of our expense will admit of reduction, consistently with the continuance of those vigorous efforts, which must be necessary for our safety, and which, at all events, cannot fail to be attended with heavy expense. In considering what may be the best mode of defraying it, we shall undoubtedly bear in mind the nature of the present crisis; and, in estimating the value of any temporary sacrifices, we shall not lose sight of the infinite importance of supporting effectually our public credit, and of convincing the enemy, that, while we join in his majesty's anxious desire for the conclusion of peace on safe and honourable terms, we possess the means, as well as the determination, to support with vigour this arduous contest, as long as it may be rendered necessary for maintaining the safety, honour, and independence of these kingdoms:

"To beseech his majesty to believe that our loyalty and attachment to his majesty, and our anxious regard for the interests of his subjects, will insure our perseverance in that line of conduct which may best preserve the advantages resulting to his people from his auspicious government:

"That the blessings which we derive from our civil and religious establishments have long been deeply imprinted on our minds, but we cannot but feel more and more, from the events of every day, how much they distinguish us among all the nations of Europe; and we shall never be unmindful that they can only be preserved by inculcating and enforcing a due reverence and obedience to the laws, by repressing, with promptitude, every attempt to disturb our internal tranquillity, and by maintaining inviolate that happy constitution which we inherit from our ancestors, on which the security and happiness of every class of his majesty's subjects essentially depend."

Mr. William Drummond said, he was inclined to hope that there had been no period since the commencement of the present war, when an address to the throne was more likely to meet with general concurrence, than the present. The ardent desire which his majesty had manifested, of restoring tranquillity to Europe, merited the warmest thanks which the House could offer; and the firmness with which he had replied to the extravagant demands of France, claimed the support of parliament. Very different, he admitted, was the language which we once hoped to

have heard upon this occasion; and no one could lament more sincerely than he did, that he had not now to congratulate the House on the entire cessation of a storm, which had convulsed all Europe. Some consolation, however, it was to Englishmen, that if farther treasures must be expended, and if more blood must flow, the blame was imputable solely to the insatiable ambition of their enemies. Ever since they had possessed even the semblance of a regular form of government, our efforts had been unremitting, to obtain for them and for ourselves the blessings of peace. But what had been the conduct of France? Bleeding at a thousand wounds, had she not uniformly refused the means of healing them? Until the negotiation at Paris, did she not show by her haughty language towards this country, her unwillingness to treat upon any terms? And when her rulers at length condescended to receive an English minister at Paris, did they not manifest, not only their contempt for the ancient usages of nations, but the insincerity of their professions with respect to peace? We should see if those same rulers had given better proofs of their faith at Lisle. The English minister, immediately upon his arrival at Lisle, delivered in a projet, the most moderate and conciliatory. How that projet was received, we are informed by the same king's Declaration. Although we had been victorious in all naval combats with our enemies—although we had made conquests, and they had made no reprisals, yet did they maintain that we should renounce the possessions which we had acquired—yet did they contend that we should act as if our arms had known only disgrace and defeat. Although we might not treat for our allies, yet they would treat for theirs. Although we might not mention Austria or Portugal, yet they would negotiate for Holland and for Spain. It farther appears from the king's Declaration, that these extravagant and absurd demands were disclaimed on the part of our enemies, when it was found that they were rejected by the British cabinet with the firmness, which circumstances required. But unfortunately, when affairs seemed to be taking a more favourable turn, a revolution happened at Paris. Men were beginning there to speak their sentiments too freely concerning the conduct of the government. Some citizens had the temerity to hint, that unless the war was brought to a speedy conclusion,

the ruin of the finances was inevitable; and others, with equal audacity, maintained that France, by encouraging commerce and the arts, might draw supplies from more certain and more honourable sources, than from the plunder of neighbouring nations. Whether or not this restoration of public opinion alarmed the rulers of France, he did not pretend to determine. Certain it was, that those virtuous citizens trembled for their safety, and thought it necessary to have recourse to strong measures. But, good God! what were those measures? Not only was the liberty of the press destroyed, not only were the rights of persons invaded, not only were private citizens arrested and imprisoned, but the majesty of the constitution itself was violated; and without the form of trial, directors and legislators were condemned to linger out their lives in perpetual exile. Let these things never be forgotten by those who praise, and love, the revolution of France, and who hail it as the æra which was to bring peace and happiness, and liberty to mankind. No sooner was the ruling party secure in its triumph, than two new commissioners were sent to Lisle, who quickly showed upon what principles they had obtained their diploma. Upon the atrocious measures which followed, he should make no comments. He would only ask, if it was necessary to add insult to insincerity, and outrage to injustice? What were the inferences to be drawn from the whole conduct of our enemies? What, unless, that, not satisfied that we should cease to hold the balance of power in Europe—not satisfied with having extended their own dominions from the Rhine to the Pyrenees, and from the Alps to the Ocean—not satisfied with having fraternised with Holland and Flanders—not satisfied with having organized and re-organized the states of Genoa and Geneva—not satisfied with having laid waste the plains of Germany, and with having pillaged the treasures of Italy—not satisfied with having added two new satellites to their system, the Cis-Alpine and the Cis-Rhinane republics,—they desire that England herself should learn the language of submission, should forget her victories, renounce her conquests, and lay her laurels together with her independance at the feet of France.—Forgetting the rank we have hitherto held among the nations of the globe, for which of the countries with which we are at war shall we make such sacrifices?

Shall it be for that people, who once, like ourselves, were free, but whose independance is fled with their spirit, their industry, and their commerce? Shall it then, be for that yet more unhappy country, where the victims of fanaticism still languish in the dungeons of the inquisition, while Jacobinism is secretly sapping the vast but hollow edifice of the monarchy? Lastly, shall it be for the ancient foe of England, that foe, too, become implacable from jealousy, and desperate from crimes? Shall France insult our ambassadors? Shall she menace our government, and dictate terms of peace to us in more than in the lofty language of Roman authority? and that at a time when her commerce is nearly annihilated, her finances exhausted, and her vanquished navy unable to dispute with ours for the empire of the ocean? No; If we were so inclined, the victories of a Howe, a St. Vincent, and a Duncan forbid us to speak the language of disgrace, or of despair. Since England become a maritime power, never did the victories of her fleets follow each other in more rapid, or more brilliant succession. But while he indulged in these reflections, so agreeable to every man who loved his country, let him not be supposed to wish to misrepresent our real situation. He thought this the most serious and most interesting contest in which we ever were engaged. It was the most serious, because our enemies seem unwilling to recognize those principles formerly admitted among civilized nations both in peace and war. It was the most interesting, because we were not fighting for aggrandizement, but for independance. We must owe our preservation to our firmness, to our fortitude, and above all, to our union; for it was only when the public mind was not harassed by doubt, and divided by opposite and contending opinion that a state could put forth all its strength, exert all its energy, and display all its resources.—If, then, continuing their exorbitant demands, if denying to us the respect which we have always claimed, and always received from other nations, our enemies refuse to grant us peace on fair terms, let us not be wanting to ourselves: and let our union be the signal to our foes, that we will resist their aggressions on our national independance, with all the zeal, all the energy, and with all the perseverance, which the love of justice, of liberty, and of our country can inspire.

Mr. Bryan Edwardssaid:—Mr. Speaker,

However presumptuous it may appear in me, a member undistinguished, and little known, I cannot refrain from rising to deliver my sentiments on this very momentous occasion. I hope that you and the House will accept it as a sufficient apology for my forwardness, that I am urged to deliver my opinion by motives which it would be criminal for me to resist, and which if I would resist, I could not. But if any farther apology be necessary for encroaching on the patience of the House, let me plead this, that the sentiments I offer are those of an honest unbiassed mind, uninfluenced by prejudice or partiality, independent of party, and regarding men only as their measures deserve regard; for, Sir, I am not connected with any party neither with ministry nor minority; on the one hand owing nothing to administration, and on the other, being averse to unqualified opposition.—Sir, no man more cordially assents than I do to that part of the address which relates to the late glorious victory obtained by our fleet under the command of lord Duncan over that of Holland. It was indeed a proud day for England, not only as it added one to the many distinguished proofs which this war has afforded of the superiority of our navy, and of the skill and valour of our officers and seamen, but as disappointing the guilty intentions of those traitors who endeavoured to promote mutiny in that bulwark of our defence. It has evinced, that our wooden walls are yet sound, and that the great bulk of our British seamen remain untainted, and are still carrying the British flag triumphant over the face of the globe.—But, Sir, I must, in strict regard to truth, declare it to be my opinion that, notwithstanding that brilliant victory, parliament never assembled at a more perilous period than that at which I have now the honour to address you. Sir, the period must be perilous, when, on looking round, we see so much to menace, and so little to console; engaged in a war, expensive and bloody beyond all example, with an enemy who seems determined to wage war, more for our ruin than her own advantage; the people galling under the weight of excessive burdens, unanimous only in their disapprobation and distrust of parliament; our strongest support, Ireland, in rebellion, or only kept down by military force. With no better prospect in our view, turn our eyes which way we will, how dreary and afflicting is the scene! How feeble

the consolation that a single victory can supply! In such a situation the victory of lord Duncan, though so far as the operation of victory can be felt, brilliant and decisive is, after all, but the triumph of an hour. A triumph dearly bought—a triumph, which, perhaps, may have disconcerted a hostile expedition, but has certainly thinned the ranks of our gallant defenders. Amidst the rejoicing for such a display of our naval superiority, what sort of heart must that be which reflects without sorrow upon the havoc of that day; which meditates upon its advantages without feeling severely for the men that fell; which, without regret and horror, reads the bloody detail in the *Gazette*—that register of a slaughter-house—that muster roll of death?—Sir, I have said that this war has been attended with a waste of wealth, and a prodigality of blood, not to be paralleled in history. This, Sir, is no idle assertion; 200 millions of money have been the waste of four years, and 200,000 the number of lives lost. And now, at the end of this frightful, irreparable loss, what does the king's speech hold out to us? Does it hold out the effectual relief of our burthens? No. Does it hold out the prospect of reconciliation and harmony in Ireland? No. Does it hold out the promise of indemnity for the past, and security for the future? No. Does it hold out peace? No such thing. It menaces us with more carnage and slaughter, with new scenes of blood, with more tears, more sighs, more, and perhaps deeper, groans of widows and orphans. But some gentlemen will say, "Why this mournful recital? What useful end can it answer to draw this melancholy picture? Have not efforts been made to obtain a peace?" To this, Sir, I shall only answer, that I am sure efforts suitable to the occasion have not been made, efforts founded in sincerity, and breathing the true spirit of peace have not been made. If we recur to lord Malmesbury's first mission to Paris, we shall, without the possibility of controversy, be able to pronounce that the minister was not sincere. I remember, the first day I had the honour of sitting in this House, the minister declared it to be his intention to take every practicable means to procure for us the blessings of peace. I did then, indeed, believe he was sincere, for I was then but a new member; soon, however, I had cause to be convinced that the minister was not sin-

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cere. The terms which the French would then have granted, and which he refused, were such as he would now gladly accept, and they decline to give. The French would have granted peace on condition of holding what they then had, but the minister would be contented with nothing short of the restitution of Belgium; and the safety of England was sacrificed to the interest of the Emperor. But I will, for sake of the argument, suppose that the failure of that attempt was owing to the arrogance of the French, and that lord Malmesbury was dismissed from Paris, with insult and disgrace. I will then ask any man of candour, whether there can be found in history any thing to equal that of sending back, in the same character, that very man who was so disgracefully treated, and whether the so sending him back was not aggravating the disgrace it brought on this country? On his lordship's going the second time, it was mere matter of course, that they should treat him with contempt. I am persuaded that it would have been a happy circumstance, if that noble lord had been empowered at the outset to make the offer of restitution desired by France. And here, Sir, I hope I may be allowed to speak with more confidence than before; my inquiries, my private information, and my local knowledge affording me means of judging, denied to many gentlemen of superior ability. From this knowledge I am competent to aver, that all the conquests we have made are not only not worth the loss and horrors of one campaign, but in fact not worth the holding. An hon. baronet (Sir F. Baring), whose intimate acquaintance with the British interests in the East cannot be called in question, once stated to you that the Cape of Good Hope, instead of being an advantage would be a burthen, grievous in itself and unproductive of any good in return: he also stated to you, and I am sure he stated no more than the fact, that Trincomale, in Ceylon, cannot be kept in our possession, unless we become masters of the whole of that island; an acquisition utterly hopeless; and that the fortifying of that port would cost more, after all, than the whole would be worth. So much for the East. Now, Sir, as to the West Indies, I venture to affirm, without fear of contradiction, that if it was to-morrow in your power to capture the whole of the French Islands, so far from being productive or advantageous,

they would either be untenable or ruinous in the holding. If gentlemen look back to the conduct of the French in that quarter, they will see that no hope can be entertained from them as good subjects. Some of those islands were ceded to us by treaty in 1763, and were upwards of thirty years in our possession and under our protection; yet at the end of that time the French inhabitants seized the first opportunity to revolt, and what is worse, instigated the negroes to rise and murder their masters. Urged by the incitements of that monster, Victor Hugues, they committed the most barbarous massacres, and by them the governor of Grenada was, together with several planters, led out to a cruel death. In such circumstances we might possibly have a barren depopulated territory, but we could have no more; and I think it is a subject of most serious consideration for the House, and of awful caution to ministers, to beware how they incur the dreadful responsibility of lavishing human blood upon such unprofitable conquests. Sir, it is fighting and sacrificing the lives of men for air—for words. Besides those, we have another, and a worse enemy to combat, whose stroke no human means can resist or evade, the hand of Omnipotence itself, armed with plague and pestilence to scourge our cupidity and ambition. And is St. Domingo a place to which we may, without guilt, send our gallant fellow-subjects? knowing, as we must, that it is as impossible to make a conquest of it, as it would be to scale the moon—to make conquest of an island, 400 miles in length and 175 in breadth, filled with hosts of enemies, and guarded against us by pestilence. There was, indeed, a man, who, if human courage and human wisdom could have accomplished it, would have reduced that island—I mean Montalambert. If there were ten such Frenchmen in that quarter, there might be some hope of securing our interests there, if they were worth the securing; for who would not fight by the side of such a man? General Simcoe, a very distinguished officer, once said, that he could conquer St. Domingo with 7,000 men; but when the question was put to him, how, having once gained, he could keep it, the French inhabitants being hostile to the government and the laws, he gave up the point.—It is, asserted by the present rulers of France that while the British ministry were seek-

ing peace, they were engaged in a conspiracy to overthrow the republican government; and though the Declaration afforded the best opportunity of contradicting it if it was false, in that Declaration it is not denied.—Upon the whole Sir, when we consider the astonishing waste of 200 millions of money, and the alarming drain of more than 200,000 men, the flower of England, sacrificed to this contest, when we see Ireland ripe for revolt, and restrained only by the terrors of the sword—when we see ourselves a divided people, unanimous only in complaint of grievances and taxes, and when we see the peerage disgraced by the introduction of men without abilities or services to entitle them to that distinction, it is impossible not to think that there is a combination of evils hanging over our heads, from which nothing can rescue us but death.—Sir, I have thought it fit thus to express myself, having no motive but an honest wish that the people may be awakened to a thorough sense of their perilous situation. The last resource of the wretched is the hope, that when things are at the worst they will mend; but even this consolation seems to be denied to us—for the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox) who has so long and with such distinguished ability influenced the opinions of this side of the House, I am sorry to perceive, has retired from the contest. Sir, if the advice of that right hon. gentleman, whose transcendent talents are his smallest praise, had been attended to, we should not at this day have to mourn over the calamities of our country. He has retired, I fear, wearied and hopeless, in prophetic and silent anguish; and when he despairs; when talents, eloquence, and firmness, like his, which once, in spite of parliamentary majorities, saved the kingdom from a ruinous war with Russia, are withdrawn in the present conjuncture, what remains for men of inferior endowments but, like him, to retire from the scene, to mourn in secret over those evils which they cannot prevent, and silently expect the certain dissolution which awaits this unhappy kingdom.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, he should not have spoken that evening, if he had not felt it his duty to resist the tendency of such extraordinary language as the hon. gentleman had used, and prevent its dangerous effects abroad. The hon. gentleman had regretted the absence of a right hon. member, who was formerly very assiduous

in that assembly, and had described him as retiring from public life, with the deepest and most amiable sorrow, to mourn over those misfortunes of his country which his perspicuity was able to foresee, though his prudence and his powers were unable to prevent them. If that right hon. gentleman had been present, however, it appeared that some benefit from his counsels might have possibly accrued, and that a lingering hope might have still existed of succour from his talents. As he was absent, however, gentlemen, it seemed, had nothing else to do but follow his example, and patiently retire in silent and prophetic anguish to wait supinely for the dissolution of their country! It was that singular declaration which had called him up; for it was so strange to his constitutional experience, and so unknown to his parliamentary capacity, that he was surprised beyond description. How the hon. gentleman should know that the right hon. gentleman alluded to did not mean to attend in his place as usual, he was at a loss to conjecture. For his own part, he knew no reason why the right hon. gentleman should refuse his aid and advice to the great council of the nation now, any more than upon former occasions; nor should he be at all surprised to see the right hon. gentleman immediately enter the door and walk up to his seat, as he was wont to do in the preceding session. If the right hon. gentleman did not come as usual, he knew no reasons why he should stay away, and could only suggest them, as he presumed the hon. gentleman had done, from vague and unauthorized reports. What the reasons for his absence might be, he should not venture to pronounce upon such loose authority, lest he should misrepresent them; but upon the manner in which the right hon. gentleman employed his time, he should say a few words, and he believed upon the same authority from which the hon. gentleman derived his information. Speaking of the manner in which the right hon. member employed his time, the hon. gentleman represented that the distresses of his country so occupied his thoughts, and so weighed down his spirits, that he sat, in silent and prophetic anguish, a perfect image of despair. Now, it was left to every one to suggest from such authority, or from their own ideas, in what manner the right hon. gentleman employed his time in his retirement; but to judge from the same faithful mirror

of his actions, a public newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle* of the 11th of October, it appeared that his melancholy was merely of a temporary nature; for although the right hon gentleman was found beginning the day of his annual festivity with regret and lamentations for the hopeless condition of his country, the same vehicle of intelligence has informed us, that several toasts were drank with great applause, the conviviality of the evening was heightened by several jovial songs. After such an account, there was no doubt but the right hon. gentleman and his patriotic friends, had distinguished themselves upon that anniversary, as they had always done on similar occasions, and that the sole cause of their meeting was the general interest they felt for the welfare of the nation. But, to be serious. He hoped and trusted, that whatever might be the regret of the right hon. gentleman for the misfortunes of his country, or however great his interest in her welfare, that he (Mr. W.) as well as every gentleman in that House, could feel as poignantly, and discharge their duty with as much zeal and patriotism, as the member who had been thus super-eminently extolled. Nay, he would go farther, and hope that as he was not influenced by personal motives to offer his advice in that assembly, he should never be capable through personal indignation, of withdrawing that advice, when the danger of his country, might be more imminent, or the proffer of his advice more useful. The hon. member had said, that the right hon. gentleman had repeatedly tried whether he could not prevent the misfortunes which had been so despondingly enumerated; but finding that all his endeavours were ineffectual, he had retired to deplore that desolation which he was not able to avert. Of the efficacy of the right hon. gentleman's propositions, which the hon. member had deemed infallible, he not only entertained doubts, but absolute disbelief. He did not therefore at all regret his absence, because he did not think his counsel worth accepting. On the contrary he would boldly deliver it as his opinion, that if the advice of the right hon. gentleman had been followed, he should not have been one of those, except in one solitary instance, who would have thought that the situation of the country would have been amended. In regard to the address, he conceived there could be no objection to it, since it merely gave

general assurances of attachment to his majesty's person and government, and promises to endeavour to resist the common enemy, and thereby to preserve our laws and liberties inviolate. He entertained as ardent a desire for peace as any one, but he could not submit to every humiliation which the enemy might think proper to demand. The inveterate hatred of the enemy towards this country, made it necessary to act with more than common vigilance, in order to leave them no pretence whatever for the rupture of the negotiation, nor any opportunity for misrepresentation to deceive the public. The hon. mover of the address had expressed his willingness to surrender as many of our conquests as were consistent with the dignity and honour of the nation. In this point he agreed with him, but differed in the manner. He was willing to make any sacrifices that might be deemed necessary, not to the Hollanders, nor to the Spaniards, nor to the French, but to his country. Nay, he would go farther than the hon. mover in this surrender, and farther than any abstract point whatever, to put a period to the war; for he would not only make a surrender of all our conquests, but a sacrifice of every thing he valued as an individual. Nothing then remained but to call upon the country to submit cheerfully to the sad alternative to which they were reduced, to join in returning thanks to Providence for the signal victory which had improved their condition, and to unite zealously and firmly to save the country from the destructive hatred and inordinate ambition of the enemy. He was sorry he had taken up so much of the time and attention of the House; but he thought it fit that every one should know both where they were, and what they were, either as legislators or individuals, under that constitution whose happy influence they hourly experienced, and whose perpetual existence they should hourly endeavour to preserve. For his own part, as he was embarked, he would never quit the ship till she was sinking, and would exhort every one interested in her safety to follow his example.

Sir Horace Mann said, he was prepared to go as far as any man in the cause of humanity; but when he considered the nature of the enemy with whom we had to contend, he saw we had no alternative left but manfully to counteract and defeat the black designs which that enemy

meditated against us. The object of those designs was no less than to destroy our commerce, to revolutionize the country, to abolish our laws, and to annihilate the constitution. But in these black attempts they would, he trusted, be baffled and confounded. He agreed in lamenting the absence of a right hon. gentleman whose political abilities he had ever highly respected. He had hoped to have seen him, and those who acted with him, in their places, and to have heard them come cheerfully forward to congratulate the country on the glorious victory which had recently crowned our naval arm; and especially after the contumelious manner in which the rulers of France had treated our ambassador; after they had betrayed a fixed design to overturn our constitution, and deprive us of all the blessings we enjoyed under it. If gentlemen would look at the late Declaration, the finest piece of composition he had ever seen, they would be convinced both of the sincerity of ministers, and of the insincerity and ambition of the enemy. Had they not banished the two directors who had betrayed a pacific disposition? While our insolent and ambitious foe persevered in his present temper, we had no alternative left but manfully to persevere in the contest.

Mr. Nicholls lamented the absence of Mr. Fox. He could not help recollecting the number of years which that right hon. gentleman had toiled in opposing a majority of that House, which supported the American war, the termination of which was principally to be ascribed to the unwearied perseverance of that accomplished statesman. If the situation of the country was such as it had been that night described, nothing was left us but to pursue a *bellum internecinum*. It was his sincere wish to support royalty, the nobility, and the rights of the commons; the whole of which were in extreme danger. But while he saw it was necessary thus to wage a war *pro aris et focis*, he could not stifle his resentment against a minister by whose ill-advised rashness it was begun, and through whose incapacity its progress had been disgraced by disaster and defeat. He could not but think that ministers were not sincere in their endeavours at negotiation. Should the war be continued the funds must give way, and the middling class of the people must be inevitably ruined, and the whole country overwhelmed with burthens. Our

finances were our main object. To these we must attend. Even should ten shillings additional be laid on land, we should not be able to continue the war for three years. We owed it as a duty to his majesty to recommend to him a change of his servants. They had long been tried, and tried to no purpose.

Sir *W. Young* asked whether, because a menace had been thrown out by the enemy was it prudent or necessary that we should sit down in despondency? But it was said, that if we had sent out a person under full power to surrender all our conquests, we should have been enabled still to treat with the enemy. To treat! For what? for our navy? Yes, assuredly, such would be the final demand of the enemy, and we should be permitted at last, like Carthage under the tyranny of ancient Rome, to keep up so many ships only on the sea, as must eventually destroy our commerce, our liberties, our security, and our existence.

The Address was then agreed to.

The King's Answer to the Commons' Address.] To the Address his Majesty returned this Answer:

"Gentlemen; I return you my warmest thanks for this loyal and dutiful address, and for the expressions of your affectionate attachment to my person and government. The assurances of your firm determination to resist, to the utmost, the unwarrantable pretensions and inordinate ambition of the enemy, afford me the highest satisfaction at this important conjuncture. They justify the reliance which I have uniformly placed on the vigour and wisdom of your councils, and leave me no room to doubt that the strength and resources of these kingdoms will be effectually employed in supporting our dearest interests, maintaining our happy constitution, and vindicating the honour and independence of the country."

Declaration respecting the Negotiation for Peace with France.] Nov. 3. Mr. Secretary Dundas presented, by command of his Majesty, the following

DECLARATION respecting the Negotiation for Peace with France dated Westminster, October 28, 1797.

His Majesty's benevolent endeavours to restore to his people the blessings of secure and honourable peace, again repeated without success, have again demonstrated beyond the possibility of doubt, the determined and per-

severing hostility of the government of France, in whose unprovoked aggression the war originated, and by whose boundless and destructive ambition it is still prolonged. And while by the course of these transactions, continued proofs have been afforded to all his majesty's faithful subjects, of his anxious and unremitting solicitude for their welfare, they cannot, at the same time, have failed to recognize in the uniform conduct of the enemy, the spirit by which the councils of France are still actuated, and the objects to which they are directed.

His majesty could not but feel how much the means of peace had been obstructed by the many additional difficulties which his enemies had so repeatedly thrown in the way of every negotiation. Nevertheless on the very first appearance of circumstances in some degree more favourable to the interests of humanity, the same ardent desire for the ease and happiness of his subjects induced his majesty to renew his overtures for terminating the calamities of war: thus availing himself of every opening which could in any manner lead to secure and honourable peace, and consulting equally the wishes of his own heart and the principles by which his conduct has invariably been guided.

New obstacles were immediately interposed by those who still directed the councils of France, and who amidst the general desire for peace, which they could not at that time openly disclaim, still retained the power of frustrating the wishes of their own country, of counteracting his majesty's benevolent intentions, and of obstructing that result, which was so necessary for the happiness of both nations. Difficulties of form were studiously created; modes of negotiation were insisted upon, the most inconsistent with their own conduct in every other instance; the same spirit appeared in every step which was taken by them; and while the most unwarranted insinuations were thrown out, and the most unfounded reproaches brought forward, the established customs and usages, which have long prevailed in Europe, were purposely departed from even in the simplest acts which were to be done on their part for the renewal of the negotiations. All these things his majesty determined to disregard; not as being insensible of their purport and tendency, nor unmindful of the importance of these points, in the public intercourse of great and independent nations, but resolving to defeat the object of these artifices, and to suffer no subordinate or inferior consideration to impede, on his part, the discussion of the weighty and extensive interests on which the termination of the war must necessarily depend.

He directed his minister to repair to France furnished with the most ample powers, and instructed to communicate at once an explicit and detailed proposal and plan of peace, reduced into the shape of a regular treaty, just and moderate in its principles, embracing all the

interests concerned, and extending to every subject connected with the restoration of public tranquillity. The communication of this paper delivered in the very first conference, was accompanied by such explanations as fully stated and detailed the utmost extent of his majesty's views, and at the same time gave ample room for the examination of every disputed point, for mutual arrangement and concession, and for reciprocal facilities arising out of the progress of fair discussion.

To this proceeding, open and liberal beyond example, the conduct of his majesty's enemies opposes the most striking contrast. From them no counter-project has ever yet been obtained: no statement of the extent or nature of the conditions on which they would conclude any peace with these kingdoms. Their pretensions have always been brought forward either as detached or as preliminary points, distinct from the main object of negotiation, and accompanied in every instance with an express reserve of farther and unexplained demands.

The points which, in pursuance of this system, the plenipotentiaries of the enemy proposed for separate discussion in their first conferences with his majesty's minister were at once frivolous and offensive; none of them productive of any solid advantage to France, but all calculated to raise new obstacles in the way of peace. And to these demands was soon after added another, in its form unprecedented, in its substance extravagant, and such as could only originate in the most determined and inveterate hostility. The principle of mutual compensation, before expressly admitted by common consent as the just and equitable basis of negotiation, was now disclaimed; every idea of moderation or reason, every appearance of justice was disregarded: and a concession was required from his majesty's plenipotentiary, as a preliminary and indispensable condition of negotiation, which must at once have superseded all the objects, and precluded all the means of treating. France, after incorporating with her own dominions so large a portion of her conquests, and affecting to have deprived herself, by her own internal regulations of the power of alienating these valuable additions of territory, did not scruple to demand from his majesty the absolute and unconditional surrender of all that the energy of his people, and the valour of his fleets and armies have conquered in the present war, either from France or from her allies. She required that the power of Great Britain should be confined within its former limits, at the very moment when her own dominion was extended to a degree almost unparalleled in history. She insisted, that in proportion to the increase of danger, the means of resistance should be diminished, and that his majesty should give up, without compensation, and into the hands of his enemies, the necessary defences of his possessions, and the future safeguards of his empire. Nor was

even this demand brought forward as constituting the terms of peace, but the price of negotiation: as the condition on which alone his majesty was to be allowed to learn what farther unexplained demands were still reserved, and to what greater sacrifices these unprecedented concessions of honour and safety were to lead.

Whatever were the impressions which such a proceeding created, they did not induce the king abruptly to preclude the means of negotiation. In rejecting, without a moment's hesitation, a demand, which could have been made for no other reason than because it was inadmissible, his majesty, from the fixed resolution to avail himself of every chance of bringing the negotiation to a favourable issue, directed that an opening should still be left for treating on reasonable and equal grounds, such as might become the dignity of his crown, and the rank and station in Europe in which it has pleased the divine Providence to place the British nation.

This temperate and conciliatory conduct was strongly expressive of the benevolence of his majesty's intentions; and it appeared for some time to have prepared the way for that result which has been the uniform object of all his measures. Two months elapsed after his majesty had unequivocally and definitively refused to comply with the unreasonable and extravagant preliminary which had been demanded by his enemies. During all that time the negotiation was continued open, the conferences were regularly held, and the demand, thus explicitly rejected by one party, was never once renewed by the other. It was not only abandoned, it was openly disclaimed; assurances were given in direct contradiction to it. Promises were continually repeated, that his majesty's explicit and detailed proposals should at length be answered by that which could alone evince a real disposition to negotiate with sincerity, by the delivery of a counter-project, of a nature tending to facilitate the conclusion of peace; and the long delays of the French government in executing these promises, were excused and accounted for by an unequivocal declaration, that France was concerting with her allies for those sacrifices on their part, which might afford the means of proceeding in the negotiation. Week after week passed over in the repetition of these solemn engagements on the part of his majesty's enemies. His desire for peace induced him to wait for their completion, with an anxiety proportioned to the importance of the object; nor was it much to expect, that his minister should at length be informed what was the extent and nature of the conditions on which his enemies were disposed to terminate the war.

It was in this stage of the business that, on the 11th of September, the appointment of new plenipotentiaries was announced on the part of France, under a formal promise that their arrival should facilitate and expedite the work of peace.

To renew in a shape still more offensive than before, the inadmissible demand so long before brought forward, and so long abandoned, was the first act of these new messengers of peace. And such was now the undisguised impatience of the king's enemies to terminate all treaty, and to exclude all prospect of accommodation, that even the continuance of the king's plenipotentiary at the appointed place of negotiation was made by them to depend on his immediate compliance with a condition which his court had, two months before, explicitly refused, and concerning which no farther discussion had since occurred. His reply was such as the occasion required; and he immediately received a positive and written order to depart from France.

The subsequent conduct of his majesty's enemies has aggravated even this proceeding, and added fresh insult to this unexampled outrage. The insurmountable obstacles which they threw in the way of peace, were accompanied with an ostentatious profession of the most pacific dispositions. In cutting off the means of negotiation, they still pretended to retain the strongest desire to negotiate: in ordering the king's minister to quit their country, they professed the hope of his immediate return to it: and in renewing their former inadmissible and rejected demand, they declared their confident expectation of a speedy and favourable answer. Yet before any answer could arrive, they published a declaration, announcing to their country the departure of the king's minister, and attempting, as in every former instance, to ascribe to the conduct of Great Britain the disappointment of the general wish for peace, and the renewal of all the calamities of war. The same attempt has been prolonged in subsequent communications, equally insidious and illusory, by which they have obviously intended to furnish the colour and empty pretence of a wish for peace, while they have still studiously and obstinately persisted in evading every step which could lead to the success of any negotiation: have continued to insist on the same inadmissible and extravagant preliminary, and have uniformly withheld all explanation, either on the particulars of the proposals of peace so long since delivered by his majesty's minister, or on any other terms on which they were themselves ready to conclude: and this in the vain hope, that it could be possible, by any artifice, to disguise the truth of these transactions, or that any exercise of power, however despotic, could prevent such facts from being known, felt, and understood, even in France itself.

To France, to Europe, and to the world, it must be manifest, that the French government (while they persist in their present sentiments) leave his majesty without an alternative, unless he were prepared to surrender and sacrifice to the undisguised ambition of his enemies the honour of his crown and the

safety of his dominions. It must be manifest, that, instead of showing, on their part, any inclination to meet his majesty's pacific overtures on any moderate terms, they have never brought themselves to state any terms (however exorbitant) on which they were ready to conclude peace. They have asked as a preliminary (and in the form the most arrogant and offensive) concessions which the comparative situation of the two countries would have rendered extravagant in any stage of negotiation; which were directly contrary to their own repeated professions; and which, nevertheless, they peremptorily required to be complied with in the very outset; reserving an unlimited power of afterwards accumulating, from time to time, fresh demands, increasing in proportion to every new concession.

On the other hand, the terms proposed by his majesty have been stated in the most clear, open, and unequivocal manner. The discussion of all the points to which they relate, or of any others which the enemy might bring forward as the terms of peace, has been, on his majesty's part, repeatedly called for, as often promised by the French plenipotentiaries, but to this day has never yet been obtained. The rupture of the negotiation is not therefore to be ascribed to any pretensions (however inadmissible) urged as the price of peace; not to any ultimate difference on terms, however exorbitant; but to the evident and fixed determination of the enemy to prolong the contest, and to pursue, at all hazards, their hostile designs against the prosperity and safety of these kingdoms.

While this determination continues to prevail, his majesty's earnest wishes and endeavours to restore peace to his subjects must be fruitless. But his sentiments remain unaltered. He looks with anxious expectation to the moment when the government of France may show a disposition and spirit in any degree corresponding to his own. And he renews, even now, and before all Europe, the solemn declaration, that, in spite of repeated provocations, and at the very moment when his claims have been strengthened and confirmed by that fresh success which, by the blessing of Providence, has recently attended his arms, he is yet ready (if the calamities of war can now be closed) to conclude peace on the same moderate and equitable principles and terms which he has before proposed: the rejection of such terms must now, more than ever, demonstrate the implacable animosity and insatiable ambition of those with whom he has to contend, and to them alone must the future consequences of the prolongation of the war be ascribed.

If such unhappily is the spirit by which they are still actuated, his majesty can neither hesitate as to the principles of his own conduct, nor doubt the sentiments and determination of his people. He will not be wanting to them, and he is confident they will not

be wanting to themselves. He has an anxious, but a sacred and indispensable duty to fulfil: he will discharge it with resolution, constancy, and firmness. Deeply as he must regret the continuance of a war, so destructive in its progress, and so burthensome even in its success, he knows the character of the brave people whose interests and honour are entrusted to him. These it is the first object of his life to maintain; and he is convinced, that neither the resources nor the spirit of his kingdoms will be found inadequate to this arduous contest, or unequal to the importance and value of the objects which are at stake. He trusts, that the favour of Providence, by which they have always hitherto been supported against all their enemies, will be still extended to them; and that, under this protection, his faithful subjects, by a resolute and vigorous application of the means which they possess, will be enabled to vindicate the independence of their country, and to resist with just indignation the assumed superiority of an enemy, against whom they have fought with the courage, and success, and glory of their ancestors; and who aims at nothing less than to destroy at once whatever has contributed to the prosperity and greatness of the British empire; all the channels of its industry, and all the sources of its power; its security from abroad, its tranquillity at home; and, above all, that constitution, on which alone depends the undisturbed enjoyment of its religion, laws, and liberties.

Papers respecting the Negotiation for Peace with France.] Mr. Secretary Dundas also presented, by his Majesty's command, the following

PAPERS RESPECTING THE NEGOTIATION FOR
PEACE WITH FRANCE.

No. 1.—OFFICIAL NOTE from lord Grenville to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the French Republic; dated Westminster, 1st June, 1797.

The signature of the preliminaries of a peace, the definitive conclusion of which is to put an end to the continental war, appears to afford to the two governments of Great Britain and France a natural opportunity and new facilities for the renewal of pacific negotiations between them: a part of the obstacles, which might have retarded this salutary work, no longer existing; and the interests to be treated of being, after this event, neither so extensive nor so complicated as they were before.

The court of London, always desirous of employing such means as are best calculated to contribute to this object, so interesting to the happiness of the two nations, is unwilling to omit renewing to the French government the assurance of the continuance of its dispositions on this subject. And the undersigned is authorized to propose to the minister for

foreign affairs to enter without delay, and in such manner as shall be judged the most expedient, upon the discussion of the views and pretensions of each party for the regulation of the preliminaries of a peace, which may be definitively arranged at the future congress.

As soon as the form of this negotiation shall have been agreed upon, the British government will be ready to concur in it, by taking on its part such measures as are the most proper for accelerating the re-establishment of the public tranquillity.

(Signed) GRENVILLE.

No. 2.—OFFICIAL NOTE from the Minister for Foreign Affairs to lord Grenville; dated Paris, 16th Prairial, 5th year of the French Republic. (June 4th, 1797.)

The undersigned minister for foreign affairs of the French Republic lost no time in laying before the Executive Directory the note which was transmitted to him on the 1st of June (O. S.) by lord Grenville in the name of his Britannic Majesty. He is directed to answer it.—The Executive Directory sees with satisfaction the desire which the cabinet of St. James's expresses to put an end, at length, to the calamities of war.—It will receive with eagerness the overtures and proposals which shall be made to it by the court of England.—The Executive Directory desires notwithstanding, that the negotiations should be set on foot at once for a definitive treaty. This proceeding appears to the Directory preferable to a congress, of which the result must be remote, and which does not correspond with the ardent desire that it has to re-establish, as quickly as possible, peace between the two powers.

(Signed) CH. DELACROIX.

No. 3.—OFFICIAL NOTE from lord Grenville to the Minister for Foreign Affairs; dated Westminster, 8th June, 1797.

The court of London has received, with the greatest satisfaction, the assurances of the dispositions of the Executive Directory to entertain with eagerness the pacific overtures of Great Britain, as well as of its desire to re-establish, as soon as possible, peace between the two powers.

Anxious to contribute to it in every thing which can depend upon itself, the British government will not delay to send to Paris, or to such other place, upon the continent, as may be agreed upon, a minister, to treat and conclude with the plenipotentiary, who shall be appointed by the Executive Directory.

The undersigned is directed to desire to know the wish of the Directory, as to the place of the negotiation, in order that a speedy determination may be taken here upon that subject; and to request the minister for foreign affairs to send him, without delay, the necessary passports, to enable the king's plenipotentiary to repair immediately to his destination. The question of signing prelimi-

nary or definitive articles, will necessarily depend upon the progress and turn of the negotiations, to which, on the part of Great Britain, will be brought the most sincere desire for the speedy re-establishment of peace.

(Signed) GRENVILLE.

No. 4.—OFFICIAL NOTE from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to lord Grenville; dated Paris, 23d Prairial, 5th Year. (June 11th, 1797.)

The Executive Directory of the French Republic has seen with satisfaction, by the official note of lord Grenville, dated June 8th (O. S.), that the court of London shows itself disposed to set on foot, without delay, the negotiation, for which it has lately made an overture. Filled with the same eagerness, convinced that the intentions of the British government are such as it describes them, the Directory has directed the undersigned, minister for foreign affairs, to transmit to lord Grenville the necessary passports for a minister furnished with full powers for the purpose of negotiating a definitive and separate treaty of Peace with the French republic. The Executive Directory has fixed upon the commune of Lisle as the place of meeting for the respective plenipotentiaries.

(Signed) CH. DELACROIX.

No. 5.—Passport; dated Paris, 23d Prairial, 5th year.

Liberty, Equality. Fraternity, Union.
In the name of the French Republic.

To all officers, civil and military, charged to maintain public order in the different departments of France, and to make the French name respected abroad.

Allow to pass freely furnished with the full powers of his Britannic Majesty for the purpose of negotiating, concluding, and signing a definitive and separate treaty of peace with the French Republic, native of, &c. &c.

going to Lisle, department of the north, the place appointed for the negotiation, without giving or suffering any hindrance to be given to him.

This passport shall be in force for decades only

Given at Paris the 3d Prairial, 5th year of the Republic, one and indivisible.

The minister for foreign affairs,
(Signed) CH. DELACROIX.

By the minister,
(Signed) T. GUIRADET, sec. gen.

No. 6.—OFFICIAL NOTE from lord Grenville, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs; dated Westminster, June 17th, 1797.

The undersigned has received from the minister for foreign affairs of the French Republic his official note, with the passport which accompanied it.

The court of London willingly accepts the

proposal of the French government with respect to the place of negotiation, and consents that Lisle shall be appointed as the place of meeting for the respective plenipotentiaries:—It being always understood, that the king's plenipotentiary shall have liberty to dispatch his couriers directly from Lisle to Dover, by way of Calais; and that the English vessels, appointed for keeping up this communication, shall be allowed freely to go into, and come out of, the port of Calais, and to pass in perfect safety between that city and Dover.

With respect to the passport, the undersigned finds himself under the necessity of remarking that the terms in which this instrument is drawn up, differ from the usual form, by the particular description which is inserted in them, of the nature and extent of the powers, and of the mission of the king's plenipotentiary.

This new form appears liable to produce, in many instances, considerable inconvenience; and according to the terms used in this particular instance, it would have the disadvantage of not answering exactly to the powers and the mission of the minister in question.

His full powers, drawn up in the usual form, will include every case; and without prescribing to him any particular mode of negotiation, will give him the most unlimited authority to conclude any articles or treaties, whether preliminary or definitive, as might best conduce to the speedy re-establishment of peace, which is the sole object of his mission.

But the court of London does not by any means make a point of concluding a preliminary treaty, and would prefer only that mode, whatever it may be, which shall be found the best calculated to accelerate the conclusion of peace.

The king's plenipotentiary then will be equally ready, and authorized to begin the negotiation without delay, upon either footing; upon the footing of a preliminary treaty—or should such continue to be the wish of the Directory, upon that of a definitive treaty.

As to what regards the question of a separate treaty—there would be no objection to settling, by a treaty of this kind, whatever relates to the respective interests of France and of Great Britain, as has been usually the practice in similar cases: but the king cannot allow any doubt to subsist as to his intention of providing for what is due to the interests of his ally her most faithful majesty. And in pursuance of the same principles, his majesty will not refuse to enter into such explanations with respect to the interests of Spain and Holland as may appear necessary for the re-establishment of peace.

After this frank and precise explanation, the British government is persuaded that the Directory will not delay to transmit to them a passport for the British plenipotentiary and his suit in the usual form, and such as was

sent in the month of October last for the mission with which lord Malmesbury was then charged.

In this expectation, and for the sake of avoiding all delay, his majesty has already made choice of the same minister to represent him on this important occasion. And the undersigned is charged to inquire on what day the French plenipotentiary will be at Lisle, in order that lord Malmesbury may arrive there at the same time.

(Signed) GRENVILLE.

No. 7.—OFFICIAL NOTE from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to lord Grenville; dated Paris, 2 Messidor. (June 20, 1797.)

The undersigned minister for foreign affairs has laid before the Directory, immediately upon its receipt, the official note addressed to him by lord Grenville, dated June 17th, 1797, (O. S.) He loses no time in replying to it, according to the orders which he has received.

The Directory, partaking most sincerely in the pacific sentiments which his Britannic Majesty announces, and wishing to bring the negotiations as quickly as possible to a happy issue, persists in requiring that the respective plenipotentiaries shall begin immediately upon their meeting to treat of a definitive treaty. The Directory accepts, with satisfaction, the consent of his Britannic Majesty upon this subject, expressed in the note of lord Grenville.

The Directory consents that his Britannic Majesty shall make, by his plenipotentiary, such proposals or stipulations as he shall think proper for her most faithful majesty, as in return the plenipotentiaries of the republic will do for their allies his Catholic Majesty and the Batavian republic.

The Directory consents that the negotiation shall be opened with lord Malmesbury. Another choice would, however, have appeared to the Directory to augur more favourably for the speedy conclusion of peace.

The Directory requires that it shall be established as a principle, that each English packet boat, which shall have brought over either the plenipotentiary or a courier, shall return without delay, and shall not be allowed to make any stay. The Directory will give orders that a French packet boat shall be furnished, without delay, to each of the couriers whom the plenipotentiary of his Britannic Majesty shall dispatch. The Directory desires, at the same time, that the couriers should not be sent too frequently; the frequent sending of them having been one of the principal causes of the rupture of the former negotiation.

After the above explanation, it becomes unnecessary to transmit to lord Grenville a new passport; the restrictions which he apprehended were to be found in that which has been addressed to him, being entirely done away. The French plenipotentiaries will have

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arrived at Lisle by the time at which lord Malmesbury can himself be there.

(Signed) CH. DELACROIX.

No. 8.—OFFICIAL NOTE from lord Grenville to the Minister for Foreign Affairs; dated Westminster, 26th June, 1797.

The undersigned has laid before the king the official note of the French government, which he received the 23rd of the present month. As to the two first articles of this note both parties are agreed. On this point therefore there is nothing to be added to the explanations already given: in consequence of which explanations lord Malmesbury will, without delay, proceed to Lisle to enter into a negotiation with the French plenipotentiaries for the completion of a definitive treaty. The remark of the Directory upon the choice which his majesty has thought fit to make of his plenipotentiary, being certainly of a nature not to require any answer.

The British government agrees to the arrangement proposed for the packet boats; provided that a French packet boat shall be furnished regularly, and without the least delay, for each courier which the British plenipotentiary shall find it necessary to dispatch; the exercise of his incontestable right in this respect being to be governed by his own discretion only, with a view to bringing the negotiation with which he is charged to a speedy and successful end.

With regard to the rupture of the last negotiation, the circumstances and the motives of it are known to all Europe; and it is not at the moment of entering into a new pacific discussion that the British government conceives that it can be of any use to recall them to recollection.

Lord Malmesbury will set out from London on the 30th of this month to proceed to Calais; from whence he will arrange his departure according to the notification he may receive of the day on which the French ministers may reach Lisle.

(Signed) GRENVILLE.

No. 9.—OFFICIAL NOTE from the Minister for Foreign Affairs to lord Grenville; dated Paris, 11 Messidor, 5th year (June 29, 1797).

The undersigned minister for Foreign Affairs lost no time in laying before the Executive Directory the Official Note addressed to him by lord Grenville, dated the 26th June (O. S.) 8th of the present month Messidor.

In answer to this note he has the honour to declare to lord Grenville, that the plenipotentiaries charged by the Directory with the negotiation, are already assembled at Lisle, and that the conferences may be set on foot as soon as the plenipotentiary of his Britannic Majesty shall have arrived there. Provision has been made that there shall never be a want of packet boats for the cou-

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riers which he shall think proper to send to London.

The undersigned at the same time apprizes lord Grenville, that a copy of this note will be delivered to lord Malmesbury on his arrival at Calais, in order that there may be nothing to hinder his immediate departure for Lisle.

(Signed) CH. DELACROIX.

No. 10.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville, dated Lisle, July 6th, Thursday, 8 P. M. 1797.

My lord;—Having had this morning my first conference with the French plenipotentiaries, and having mutually exchanged our full powers, I think it my duty to dispatch a messenger, in order that his majesty may have the earliest information of this circumstance. My dispatch however must be confined to this alone, as nothing whatever has yet passed relative to the negotiation itself.

No. 11.—COPY of the full Powers of the French Plenipotentiaries.

Equality.

Liberty.

EXTRACT from the registers of the deliberations of the Executive Directory.

Paris the 30th Prairial, 5th year of the French Republic, One and Indivisible.

The Executive Directory, after having heard the Report of the minister for Foreign Affairs, decrees as follows :

The citizens Letourneur, heretofore member of the Executive Directory, Pleville le Pelley, and Maret, are authorized to negotiate with the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic Majesty, the treaty of peace to be concluded between the French Republic and Great Britain. The Directory gives them the necessary full powers for agreeing upon and signing the articles of the treaty to be made. They shall conform themselves to the instructions which have been, or shall be given to them by the Executive Directory, to whom they shall render an account of the progress and the issue of the negotiations.

They are equally authorized, and under the same conditions, to stipulate for the allies of the Republic, his Catholic Majesty and the Batavian Republic.

The citizen Colchen, appointed secretary general to the French legation, is authorized to assist at the conferences, to afford the information which shall be required of him, and to take a note of what shall be agreed upon and settled. The present decree shall not be printed for the present.

[A true Copy.]

The President of the
Executive Directory,
CARNOT.

By the Executive Directory,
the Secretary General,
LAGARDE.

No. 12.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville, dated Lisle, Tuesday, 11th July, 1797.

I had the honour in my last, by Brooks, of the 6th instant, to inform your lordship of my arrival here, of the manner in which I had been received, and of my having, in the usual form, exchanged my full powers with the French plenipotentiaries.

On Friday the 7th at noon we held our second conference.

I opened this second conference with the French plenipotentiaries, by saying, that I myself had no observations to make on their full powers which appeared to be conformable to those usually given by the Directory to their plenipotentiaries, and of course must be considered as sufficient for the purposes expressed in them; that I, however, had transmitted them by a messenger to my court, and reserved to myself the right of communicating any objections or remarks which I might receive by the return of my messenger, relative to them.

M. le Tourneur, to whom, as president of the commission, I addressed myself, replied, that they had taken precisely the same steps as myself; that they considered the full powers I had given in, as in due form, and sufficient; but that they also reserved to themselves the same right, in regard to instructions they might receive from the Directory on this subject, as I had claimed in regard to my court.

To this, of course, I assented.

On Saturday the 8th instant, I gave in the projet precisely as I had received it from your lordship; a copy of which (A.) as it is translated into French, I think it my duty to inclose.

One of the French plenipotentiaries proposed that some time should be given them to take the proposals I had made into consideration, and begged of me merely for the sake of accuracy, and to help their memory, that I would be good enough either to let M. Colchen put down on paper, or myself send them a note containing the words with which I wished the articles left in blank to be filled up. I readily acquiesced in the latter mode, and immediately on my return sent them the inclosed note (B).

On Sunday evening I received the inclosed note (C.) from the French plenipotentiaries, and in consequence of it went to the proposed conference yesterday.

One of the French plenipotentiaries informed me on the subject of the projet I had given them, and the note with which I had accompanied it, that as these papers contain many points on which their instructions did not enable them to answer, they had, after having given them a very serious attention, sent them, with such observations as they had thought it their duty to make on them, to the Directory, and that the moment they re-

ceived an answer, they would communicate it to me. But that in the meanwhile, not to delay the progress of the negotiation, they wished that several points which he termed insulated, but which, though not referred to in our projet, were, he said, inseparably connected with the general subject of peace, might be discussed and got rid of now if I had no objection, and that it was with this view they had requested me to meet them.—On my not expressing any disapprobation to this mode of proceeding, one of the French plenipotentiaries began, by saying, that in the preamble of the treaty the title of king of France was used; that this title they contended could no longer be insisted on, the abolition of it was in a manner essential to the full acknowledgment of the French Republic, and that as it was merely titular as far as related to his majesty, but quite otherwise in the sense in which it applied to them, he hoped it would not be considered as an important concession.

I informed him, that on all former occasions, a separate article had been agreed to, which appeared to me to answer every purpose they required, and which it was my intention, as the treaty advanced, to have proposed, as proper to make part of this. The article (the first of the separate ones in the treaty of 1783) was then read; but they objected to it, as not fully meeting their views. It was to the title itself, as well as to any right which might be supposed to arise from it, that they objected. I could scarce allow myself to treat this mode of reasoning seriously. I endeavoured to make them feel that it was cavilling for a mere word; that it was creating difficulties where none existed; and that if all the French monarchs in the course of three centuries had allowed this to stand in the preamble of all treaties and transactions between the two countries, I could not conceive, after its having been used for so long a period without any claim or pretension being set forth in consequence of it, how it could now affect either the dignity, security, or importance of the republic—that in fact such titles have ever been considered as indefeasable, and as memorials and records of former greatness, and not as pretensions to present power—and I quoted the titles of the kings of Sardinia and Naples, &c. as examples exactly in point. I argued however in vain. They treated it very gravely, and made so strong a stand upon it, that I could not avoid taking it for reference, which I thought it better to do, than feeling as I did at the moment, to push the conversation farther.

The second insulated point was a very material one indeed, and which, although it has been adverted to as a proposal that might possibly be brought forward, I confess came upon me unexpectedly.—It was to ask either a restitution of the ships taken and destroyed at Toulon, or an equivalent for them. They

grounded this claim on the preliminary declaration made by lord Hood on his taking possession of Toulon; and on the eighth article of the declaration of the committee of the sections to him. They said, peace they hoped was about to be re-established; that his majesty, in acknowledging the Republic, admitted that a sovereignty existed in the French government; and of course that the ships, held only as a deposit by England till this legal authority was admitted, ought now to be restored. I replied that this claim was so perfectly unlooked for, that it was impossible for me to have been provided for it in my instructions, and that I could therefore only convey my own private sentiments on it, which were, that they could not have devised a step more likely to defeat the great end of our mission. One of the French plenipotentiaries said, that he sincerely hoped not; that without a restitution of the ships an equivalent might be found to effect the purpose desired, since their great object was, that something should appear to prove that this just demand had not been overlooked by them, and was not left unsatisfied by us. I told him fairly, I did not see where this equivalent was to be found, or how it could be appreciated; and that considering the great advantages France had already obtained by the war, and those she was likely to obtain from the act of condescension I had already intimated his majesty was disposed to make in order to restore peace, I was much surprised, and deeply concerned at what I heard, I trusted, therefore, that this very inadmissible proposal would be withdrawn. They said it was not in their power; and one of them, from a written paper before him, which he said were his instructions, read to me words to the effect I have already stated.

Their third question was as to any mortgage we might have upon the Low Countries, in consequence of money lent to the Emperor by Great Britain.—They wished to know if any such existed, since as they had taken the Low Countries charged with all their incumbrances, they were to declare that they should not consider themselves bound to answer any mortgage given for money lent to the Emperor, for the purpose of carrying on war against them.

I told them that without replying to this question, supposing the case to exist, the exception they required should have been stated in their treaty with the Emperor, and could not at all be mixed up in ours; that if they had taken the Low Countries as they stood charged with all their incumbrances, there could be no doubt what these words meant, and that if no exception was stated in the first instance, none could be made with a retro-active effect.

The French plenipotentiaries, however, were as tenacious on this point as on the other two; and as I found to every argument I used that they constantly opposed their

instructions, I had nothing to do but to desire that they would give me a written paper stating their three claims, in order that I might immediately transmit it to your lordship; and on this being promised, our conference broke up.

Between four and five P. M. yesterday, I received the inclosed note (D), and I have lost no time since it is in my possession in preparing to send away a messenger, as independent of the disagreeable subjects brought forward in this last conference, and which it is material should be communicated without delay, I am anxious his majesty should be informed of what has passed in general up to this day, as it may perhaps furnish some ideas as to the possible event of the negotiation.

No. 13.—(A.) PROJECT delivered by lord Malmesbury to the French Plenipotentiaries; 8th July 1797.

PROJECT OF A TREATY OF PEACE.

Be it known to all those whom it shall or may in any manner concern. The most serene and most potent prince George the third by the grace of God, king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, duke of Brunswick and Lunenburgh, arch-treasurer and elector of the holy Roman empire, and the Executive Directory of the French Republic, being equally desirous to put an end to the war, which has for some time past subsisted between the dominions of the two parties, have named and constituted for their plenipotentiaries, charged with the concluding and signing of the definitive treaty of peace: viz. the king of Great Britain, the lord baron of Malmesbury, a peer of the kingdom of Great Britain, knight of the most honourable order of the Bath, privy councillor to his Britannic Majesty, and the Executive Directory of the French Republic, who, after having exchanged their respective full powers, have agreed upon the following Articles:—

I.—As soon as this treaty shall be signed and ratified, there shall be an universal and perpetual peace as well by sea as by land, and a sincere and constant friendship between the two contracting parties, and their dominions and territories, and people, without exception of either places or persons; so that the high contracting parties shall give the greatest attention to the maintaining between themselves and their said dominions, territories, and people, this reciprocal friendship and intercourse, without permitting hereafter, on either part, any kind of hostilities to be committed either by sea or by land, for any cause, or under any pretence whatsoever. There shall be a general oblivion and amnesty of every thing which may have been done or committed by either party towards the other before or since the commencement of the war; and they shall carefully avoid for the future every thing which might prejudice the union happily re-established.

Immediately after the exchange of the ratifications of this treaty, orders shall be sent to the armies and squadrons of both parties to stop all hostilities, and for the execution of this article, sea passes shall be given on each side to the ships dispatched to carry the news of peace to the possessions of the two parties.

II.—The treaties of peace of Nimeguen of 1678 and 1679, of Ryswick of 1697, and of Utrecht of 1713; that of Baden of 1714, that of the Triple Alliance of the Hague of 1717; that of the Quadruple Alliance of London of 1718; the Treaty of Peace of Vienna of 1736; the Definitive Treaty of Aix la Chapelle of 1748; the Definitive Treaty of Paris of 1763; and that of Versailles of 1783, serve as a basis and foundation to the peace, and to the present treaty. And for this purpose they are all renewed and confirmed in the best form, so that they are to be exactly observed for the future in their full tenor, and religiously executed by both parties in all the points which shall not be derogated from by the present treaty of peace.

III.—All the prisoners taken on either side as well by land as by sea, and the hostages carried away or given during the war, shall be restored without ransom, in six weeks at latest, to be computed from the day of the exchange of the ratifications of the present treaty.—Each party respectively discharging the advances which shall have been made for the subsistence and maintenance of their prisoners in the country where they shall have been detained, according to the receipts attested accounts, and other authentic vouchers, which shall be furnished on each side; and security shall be reciprocally given for the payment of the debts which the prisoners may have contracted in the countries where they may have been detained, until their entire release.

IV.—With respect to the rights of fishery on the coasts of the island of Newfoundland, and of the islands adjacent, and in the gulph of St. Lawrence, the two parties shall return to the same situation in which they stood respectively, according to the treaties and engagements subsisting at the period of the commencement of the war. And with this view, his majesty consents to restore to France, in full right the islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

V.—The same principle of the state of possession before the war, is adopted by mutual consent, with respect to all other possessions and rights on both sides, in every part of the world; save only the exceptions which are stipulated by the subsequent articles of this treaty. And, to this intent, all possessions or territories which have or may have been conquered by one of the parties from the other (and not specially excepted in this treaty) shall be restored to the party to whom they belonged at the commencement of the present war.

From this principle of mutual restitution, the two parties have agreed to except

which, shall remain to his Britannic majesty, in full sovereignty.

VII.—In all cases of restitution provided by the present treaty, the fortresses shall be restored in the same condition in which they now are, and no injury shall be done to any works that have been constructed since the conquest of them.

VIII.—It is also agreed, that in every case of restitution or cession provided by any of the articles of this treaty, the term of three years from the date of the notification of the treaty, in the respective territory or place restored or ceded, shall be allowed to persons of whatever description, residing or being in the said territory or place, possessed of property therein under any title existing before the war, or which has since devolved to them by the laws then existing; during which term of three years they shall remain and reside unmolested in the exercise of their religion, and in the enjoyment of their possessions and effects, upon the conditions and titles under which they so acquired the same, without being liable in any manner, or under any pretence, to be prosecuted or sued for their past conduct, except as to the discharge of just debts to individuals; and that all those who, within the time of months after the notification of this treaty, shall declare to the government, then established, their intention to withdraw themselves, or their effects, and to remove to some other place, shall have and obtain, within one month after such declaration full liberty to depart and to remove their effects, or to sell and dispose of the same, whether moveable or immoveable, at any time within the said period of three years, without any restraint or hinderance, except on account of debts at any time contracted, or of any criminal prosecution for acts done subsequent to the notification of this treaty.

IX.—As it is necessary to appoint a certain period for the restitutions herein-before stipulated, it is agreed that the same shall take place in Europe within (one month) in Africa and America within (three months) and in Asia within (six months) after the ratification of the present treaty.

X.—For preventing the revival of the law suits which have been ended in the territories to be restored by virtue of this treaty, it is agreed that the judgments in private causes pronounced in the last resort, and which have acquired the force of matters determined, shall be confirmed and executed according to their form and tenor.

XI.—The decision of the prizes and seizures of ships and their cargoes taken at sea or seized in the ports of either country, prior to the hostilities, shall be referred to the respective courts of justice; so that the legality of the said prizes and seizures shall be decided according to the law of nations, and to treaties,

in the courts of justice of the nation which shall have made the capture or ordered the seizures. And in order to prevent all causes of complaint and dispute which may arise on account of prizes which may be made at sea after the signing of this treaty, it is reciprocally agreed that the vessels and effects which may be taken in the British channel, and in the North seas, after the space of twelve days, to be computed from the exchange of the ratifications of this treaty, shall be restored on each side:—That the term shall be one month from the British channel and the North seas, as far as the Canary islands inclusively, whether in the ocean or in the Mediterranean:—two months from the said Canary islands, as far as the equinoctial line or equator:—three months from the equator to any part of the Westward of the Cape of Good Hope, and the Eastward of Cape Horn:—and lastly, five months in all other parts of the world, without any exception or any more particular description of time or place.

XII.—The allies of the two parties, that is to say, her most faithful majesty as ally of his Britannic Majesty, and his Catholic Majesty and the Batavian Republic as allies of the French Republic, shall be invited by the two contracting parties to accede to this peace on the terms and conditions specified in the three following articles: the execution of which the said two contracting parties reciprocally guarantee to each other, being thereto respectively authorized by their above-mentioned allies:—and the two contracting parties further agree, that if their allies respectively shall not have so acceded within the space of two months after the exchange of the ratifications of this treaty, the party so refusing to accede, shall not receive from its ally any aid or succour of any nature during the further continuance of the war.

XIII.—His Britannic Majesty engages to conclude a definitive peace with his Catholic Majesty on the footing of the state of possession before the war, with the exception of which shall remain in full sovereignty with his Britannic Majesty.

XIV.—His Britannic Majesty in like manner engages to conclude a definitive peace with the Batavian Republic on the same footing of the state of possession before the war, with the exception of

which shall remain to his Britannic Majesty in full sovereignty, and of which shall be ceded to his majesty in exchange for

In consideration of these restitutions, to be hereby made to his Britannic Majesty, all property belonging to the prince of Orange, in the month of December 1794, and which has been seized and confiscated since that period, shall be restored to him, or a full equivalent in money given him for the same. And the French Republic farther engages to procure for him,

at the general peace, an adequate compensation for the loss of his offices and dignities in the United Provinces; and the persons who have been imprisoned or banished, or whose property has been sequestered or confiscated in the said Republic, on account of their attachment to the interests of the house of Orange, or to the former government of the United Provinces, shall be released, and shall be at liberty to return to their country, and to reside therein, and to enjoy their property there, conforming themselves to the laws and constitution there established.

XV.—The French Republic engages to conclude a definitive peace with her most faithful majesty on the same footing, of the state of possession before the war; and without any farther demand or burthensome condition being made on either side.

XVI.—All the stipulations contained in this treaty respecting the time and manner of making the restitutions therein mentioned, and all the privileges thereby reserved to the inhabitants or proprietors in the islands or territories restored or ceded, shall apply in like manner to the restitutions to be made by virtue of any of the three last articles, viz. the XIIIth, XIVth, and XVth, except in those instances where the same may be derogated from by the mutual consent of the parties concerned.

XVII.—All former treaties of peace between the respective parties to whom the said three articles relate, and which subsisted and were in force at the commencement of hostilities between them respectively, shall be renewed, except in such instances only where the same may be derogated from by mutual consent; and the articles of this treaty for the restoration of prisoners, the cessation of hostilities, and the decision relative to prizes and seizures, shall equally apply to the respective parties to whom the said three articles relate, and shall be held to be in full force between them, as soon as they shall respectively and in due form have acceded to this treaty.

XVIII.—All sequestrations imposed by any of the parties named in this treaty, on the rights, properties, or debts, of individuals belonging to any other of the said parties, shall be taken off, and the property of whatever kind shall be restored in the fullest manner to the lawful owner; or just compensation be made for it: and all complaints of injury done to private property, contrary to the usual practice and rules of war, and all claims of private rights or property which belonged to individuals at the periods of the commencement of hostilities respectively, between the said parties, viz. Great Britain and Portugal on the one side, and France, Spain, and Holland, on the other; and which ought, according to the usual practice and law of nations, to revive at the period of peace shall be received, heard, and decided, in the respective courts of justice of the different parties: and full justice therein shall be done by each of the said parties to the subjects and people of the other

in the same manner, as to their own subjects or people.

And if any complaints should arise respecting the execution of this article, which complaints shall not be settled by mutual agreement between the respective governments within twelve months after the same shall have been preferred to them, the same shall be determined by sworn commissioners to be appointed on each side, with power to call in an arbitrator of any indifferent nation; and the decision of the said commissioners shall be binding, and without appeal.

XIX. His Britannic majesty and the French Republic promise to observe sincerely, and *bonâ fide*, all the articles contained and established in the present treaty; and they will not suffer the same to be infringed, directly or indirectly, by their respective subjects; and the said contracting parties guarantee to each other, generally and reciprocally, all the stipulations of the present treaty.

XX. The solemn ratifications of the present treaty, prepared in good and due form, shall be exchanged in between the contracting parties, in the space of a month, or sooner, if possible, to be computed from the day of the signature of the present treaty.

In witness whereof, &c. &c.

No. 14.—(B.) NOTE from lord Malmesbury, to the French Plenipotentiaries; dated Lisle, July 8, 1797.

The minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty has the honour of presenting to the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic, in consequence of the wish expressed by them in the conference of this morning, the following note: which he requests them at the same time to consider, not so much in the light of an official paper as of a verbal and confidential communication, and as a proof of his readiness to facilitate the progress of the negociation, by giving them, on the very outset, all the explanations in his power on the projet of the treaty which he has delivered to them.

If, as the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic have assured him, it is contrary to their most positive instructions to enter into any discussion relative to the cession of those possessions which belonged to France before the war, it is useless to dwell on the sixth article: since the compensations which his Britannic majesty might have demanded by that article, in return for the restitutions which he is disposed to make for the re-establishment of peace, must, in consequence of this declaration, be sought for in the cessions to be made by his Catholic majesty, and the Batavian Republic.

Lord Malmesbury therefore proposes to insert in the thirteenth article, after the words *status antè bellum*, the following words: "With the exception of the island of Trinidad, which shall remain in full possession to his Britannic majesty."

Lord Malmesbury imagines that it is unnecessary for him to repeat the reasons which induce him to insist upon the retaining of this conquest, unless compensation should be made for it by some other cession which shall balance the augmentation of power accruing to France, from the acquisition of the Spanish part of St. Domingo.

With regard to the fourteenth article, lord Malmesbury proposes, that after the words *status ante bellum*, should be added, "With the exception of the town, fort, and establishment of the Cape of Good Hope, and of the possessions which belonged to the Dutch before the war in the island of Ceylon, and of the town and fort of Cochin, which shall be ceded to his Britannic majesty in exchange for the town of Negapatnam and its dependencies."

Lord Malmesbury repeats to the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic the assurance of his readiness to concur with them, in every thing which shall depend on him, to bring the negotiation to a happy issue; and requests of them, at the same time, to accept the assurances of his high consideration.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 15.—(C.) NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle, 21 Messidor 5th year (July 9, 1797).

The ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic have received the note which the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty did them the honour of addressing to them yesterday. They will give to it, as well as to the projet of a treaty to which it relates, the most serious attention. In the mean time, though they are not yet enabled to communicate to lord Malmesbury the remarks to which these two papers appear to them liable, they think it their duty to propose to him a conference to-morrow at one o'clock, if that hour is agreeable to him, in order to treat with him on distinct points, the discussion of which may be entered upon separately, and which may be proceeded in without delay.—They request, &c.

(Signed) LE TOURNEUR.
PLEVILLE LE PELLEY.
HUGUES B. MARET.

No. 16.—(D.) NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle, 22 Messidor, 5th year (July 10, 1797).

The ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic lose no time in complying with the wish expressed to them by the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty, by transmitting to him a note on the three points which were the subject of their conference of this day.

1. They have positive orders to require the renunciation of the title of king of France borne by his Britannic majesty. Lord

Malmesbury is requested to observe that the question is not only of a renunciation of the rights which might be pretended to be derived from this title, but further and formally of the title itself. The establishment of the French Republic, and the acknowledgment of this form of government by the king of England, will not allow of his retaining a title which would imply the existence in France of an order of things which is at an end.

2. The ministers plenipotentiary of the Republic are ordered to demand the restitution of the vessels taken or destroyed at Toulon. Great Britain has publicly and formally declared that these vessels were taken in trust for the king of France. This trust is sacred. It incontestably belongs to the Republic, which exercises the rights and the sovereignty that Great Britain attributed to Louis 17th, at the period of the capture of Toulon. His Britannic majesty cannot, therefore, in acknowledging the French Republic, deny its right to the restitution required, or refuse either to make the restitution, or to offer an equivalent for it.

3. The ministers plenipotentiary have orders to demand, and do demand, the renunciation, on the part of his Britannic majesty, of the mortgage on Belgium. That country was mortgaged for the loans made by the Emperor in England. It has become an integral part of the French Republic, and cannot remain burthened with such a mortgage.

(Signed) LE TOURNIER.
PLEVILLE LE PELLEY.
HUGUES B. MARET.

No. 17.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Grenville to lord Malmesbury; dated Downing-street, 13th July, 1797.

With respect to the demands contained in the note transmitted to your lordship by the French ministers, they have been naturally received here with great surprise. On the subject of the Netherlands as connected with the Austrian loans, it is conceived that any explanation between his majesty and the French government is wholly unnecessary. The loans raised in England for the service of the emperor of Germany, and guaranteed by act of parliament here, rest, as your lordship will perceive, by the annexed copy of the convention on that subject, upon the security of all the revenues of all the hereditary dominions of his imperial majesty. They do not seem in any manner to come under the description contained in the sixth article of the preliminaries between Austria and France, respecting mortgages upon the soil of the Netherlands, on which ground alone France could have any pretence to interfere in the business. Nor is this subject one which appears to be in any manner a fit point of discussion between his majesty and the Republic; the king neither forms, nor has any intention of forming any demand on the French government for the payment of any part either of

the interest or capital of those loans. It is to the Emperor alone that his majesty looks for the performance of his imperial majesty's engagements to him, and it is upon the Austrian government, and upon its revenues, that individuals concerned in those loans have claims of private right, and means of personal demand secured to them by the convention.—On the other two points I have nothing to add to the observations which your lordship has already made upon them: and we can therefore only wait with impatience for the answer to the projet delivered by your lordship, which will enable us to form a judgment on the intentions of the government with whom we are treating.

No. 18.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville, dated Lisle, 16th July, 1797.

It was at the express invitation of the French plenipotentiaries that I met them on Thursday the 13th instant; one of them stated their motive for wishing to confer with me, not to be in consequence of any answer they had received from Paris on the subject of the projet, which he observed could not be expected so soon, but to resume the discussion on the article which he had objected to on my first reading the projet, and on which they conceived it was possible and even expedient to argue before we entered on the more important branches of the negotiation. It was article II. that he referred to. He objected to the renewal of the treaties therein mentioned from various reasons: first, that many, and even most of them were irrelevant to that we were now negotiating; secondly, that they were in contradiction to the new order of things established in France, as they seem to imply an acknowledgment that a portion of the regal authority is still existing; thirdly, that they might be supposed to apply to conventions and stipulations, in direct contradiction to their present form of government, and he quoted the convention of Pilnitz in particular. I was about to reply to him, and I trust in a way that would have done away his apprehensions on this point, when another of them interposed by saying, that their sincere and only desire was that the treaty we were now entering upon might be so framed, as to secure permanently the object for which it was intended, that no article likely to produce this end might be omitted, nor any doubtful one inserted; but that the whole, as well with regard to the past as to the future, might be so clearly and distinctly expressed, that no room for cavil might be left. This he assured me in the name of his colleagues, was all that was meant by their objection to renew so many treaties in which such various interests were blended, and so many points discussed foreign to the present moment. Their renewing them in a lump, and without examining carefully to what we were pledged by them, might involve us

in difficulties much better to be avoided. I replied, that I admitted most certainly all he said, and that it was with this view and on this principle solely that the renewal of these treaties was proposed by his majesty; and that if he recollected (as he undoubtedly did) the different wars which were terminated by these treaties, and the many important regulations stipulated by them, he would admit that the allowing them to remain in their full force was simply an acknowledgment of the tenure by which almost all the sovereigns of Europe, and particularly the French Republic, held their dominions up to this day. That these treaties were become the law of nations, and that infinite confusion would result from their not being renewed.

He replied, that our object was evidently the same; that we only differed as to the manner. I thought the renewing these treaties *in toto* would the best contribute to it; while they were inclined to think, that extracting from them every thing which immediately related to the interests of the two countries, and stating it in one article, was more likely to attain this desirable object. The French minister again repeated, that their first wish was, that the treaty we were now making should be clear, distinct, solid, and lasting, and such a one as could not, at any future period, be broken through without a manifest violation of good faith. And I again repeated, that nothing could be so consonant to my orders, or the intentions of my royal master.

One of the French plenipotentiaries was disposed to dwell on his objections, which were, that these treaties were signed when France was a monarchy, and that any retrospect to those times implied a sort of censure on their present form of government; but this was arguing on such weak ground, and so incapable of being seriously maintained, that I, to avoid superfluous contradiction, was very willing to let it pass unnoticed. After a good deal of very conciliatory, and even amicable discussion, in which, however, neither party gave much way to the other, it was proposed by them that we should return home, to meet again as soon as was convenient, and after an attentive and deliberate perusal of these treaties, in order to state respectively our ideas on this subject. I observed, that although I was perfectly prepared to do it at the moment, and felt almost bold enough to affirm, that no measure could be devised which would so completely meet our intentions as an unreserved renewal of the treaties they hesitated about, yet I was very willing to acquiesce in their proposal, with this simple observation, that if any delay arose from it, such delay was imputable to them and not to me. My words were, "*Je ne me rends pas responsable des longueurs dans lesquelles cette discussion pourrait nous entraîner.*" The French ministers answer was, "*Si des longueurs servent à déterminer*

des objets qui pourraient donner lieu à des querelles à l'avenir, ce sera du tems bien employé." It was not my wish to contest this assertion, and our conference ended with it.

No. 19.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury, to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 16th July, 1797.

My lord; Yesterday at the moment I was preparing to attend the conference, in which we were to enter into fuller discussions on the litigated subject of the renewal of the treaties mentioned in the second article of the projet, I received from the French legation the inclosed paper (A). In about an hour I returned the inclosed answer (B), to which I received the inclosed reply (C); and I am this moment come from the conference which has taken place in consequence of it.

I began by saying, that I had solicited this interview from the same motive which would actuate every part of my conduct; that I wished to make my reports not only correct but conciliatory as far as depended on me, and I now was come in order, if possible, to obtain from them such comments and explanations on the note they sent to me yesterday, as would enable me, when I transmitted it to my court, to secure the negotiation from being interrupted, perhaps abruptly terminated, by the perusal of it. If I understood it right, it meant that the Directory requires as a *sine qua non* preliminary, that every thing the king has conquered from all and each of his enemies should be restored, and that till this restoration was consented to the negotiation was not even to begin. I said, if I was correct in this statement, and the plain sense of the declaration would bear no other interpretation, I must add that it would not only most certainly prevent the treaty from beginning, but would leave no room for treating at all, since it deprived his majesty of every means of negotiation; for I could not suppose that it was in their thoughts to intimate that the principle of the treaty, as far as it related to his majesty, was to be one of all cession and no compensation, and yet that was precisely the position in which his majesty, was placed by their note.

One of the French plenipotentiaries, who had let me proceed rather reluctantly, here stopt me, and said, that he and his colleagues were exceedingly happy that I had expressed a wish to see them before I dispatched my messenger; that they wished to assure me, that they had thought it dealing fairly and honourably to state what they had received from the Directory in the very words in which it came to them; that they should be sorry if the declaration they had been directed to make me, should be of a nature to interrupt much less to break off, the negotiation; that it was the sincere wish of the Directory that the negotiation should proceed and end successfully; and that, far from shutting the

door to further discussions, they were perfectly ready to hear any proposals we had to make, and only wished that these proposals should be, if possible, such as were compatible with their most sacred engagements. I repeated what I had said, that no door was left open if his majesty was *in limine* to restore every thing; and that a peace on these conditions would not be heard of by the country. I observed, that immediately on leaving them, I should dispatch a messenger; but what that messenger carried would most materially affect the progress and issue of the negotiation; I therefore desired to know whether, in consequence of what I had heard from them, I might consider the strict and literal meaning of the declaration not to be a decided negative (which it certainly seemed to imply) on all compensation whatever to be made to his majesty, but that proposals tending to this effect would still be listened to. One of them answered, "certainly, and if they should be found such as it will be impossible for us to admit, we will on our side bring forward others for your court to deliberate on." Under this assurance, which at least, to a certain degree, qualifies the declaration of yesterday I broke up the conference.

No. 20.—(A). NOTE from the French plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury: dated Lisle, 27th Messidor, 5th year (July 15, 1797).

The ministers plenipotentiary of the French republic have transmitted to their government the project of the treaty, and the note relating thereto, which were delivered to them the 20th of the present month, by the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty.

They have just received fresh communications and orders, which require that they should make the following declaration to lord Malmesbury.

There exist in the public and secret treaties, by which the French republic is bound to its allies, Spain and the Batavian republic, articles by which the three powers respectively guarantee the territories possessed by each of them before the war.

The French government, unable to detach itself from the engagements which it has contracted by these treaties, establishes, as an indispensable preliminary of the negotiation for the peace with England, the consent of his Britannic majesty to the restitution of all the possessions which he occupies, not only from the French republic, but further and formally of those of Spain and the Batavian republic.

In consequence, the undersigned ministers plenipotentiary request lord Malmesbury to explain himself with regard to this restitution and to consent to it, if he is sufficiently authorised to do so; if not, and in the contrary case, to send a messenger to his court, in order to procure the necessary powers.

The object of the conference which was to have taken place to day being necessarily delayed by the purport of the above-mentioned declaration, the ministers plenipotentiary of the republic have to express to lord Malmesbury the regret that they feel in losing this opportunity of conversing together which they had themselves solicited: but in case lord Malmesbury should have any communication to make to them, they beg him to believe that they will always be happy to receive him, and to listen to him, whenever he may think it proper.—They request him, at the same time, to accept anew, &c.

(Signed) LE TOURNEUR,
PLEVILLE LE PELLEY,
HUGUES B. MARET.

No. 21.—(B). NOTE from lord Malmesbury to the French plenipotentiaries, dated Lisle, 15th July 1797.

The minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty has given the most serious attention to the Note dated this morning, which he has received from the ministers plenipotentiary of the French republic.

He has no hesitation in declaring to them, that his instructions by no means authorise him to admit, as a preliminary principle, that which their declaration seems intended to establish: Nevertheless, being persuaded that it is his first duty not to give up the hopes of conciliation until he shall have exhausted every means of obtaining it, and being anxious to avoid, in the report which he shall have to make to his court, the possibility of misunderstanding on a subject of such importance, he proposes to them a conference for to-morrow, at the hour most convenient to them, after which it is his intention to dispatch a messenger to his court.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 22.—(C). NOTE from the French plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle, 27 Messidor, 5th year (July 15, 1797).

The ministers plenipotentiary of the French republic lose no time in acceding to the desire expressed by the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty, of conferring with them on the subject of the note which they addressed to him this day. They have in consequence the honour of proposing to him to meet to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock, at the usual place of conference.—They request him to accept, &c.

(Signed) LE TOURNEUR,
PLEVILLE LE PELLEY,
HUGUES B. MARET.

No. 23.—DISPATCH from lord Grenville to lord Malmesbury, dated Downing-street 20th July 1797,

My lord; your lordship's dispatches by the messenger Dressins, were received here on the 17th instant, at night, and I lost no time

in receiving his majesty's commands on the very important subject of your letter No. 9.

I am much concerned to be under the necessity of remarking, that the claim brought forward in the Note transmitted to your lordship by the French plenipotentiaries, is in itself so extravagant, and so little to be reconciled either with the former professions of those ministers, or with their conduct in the previous stages of the negotiation, that it affords the strongest presumption of a determination to preclude all means of accommodation. If such is really the determination of the Directory, nothing can remain for this country, but to persevere in opposing, with an energy and spirit proportioned to the exigency, a system which must tend to perpetuate a state of war and civil tumult in every part of Europe.

The natural step upon the present occasion would therefore have been to direct your lordship to terminate at once a negotiation, which, on the footing now proposed by the enemy, affords neither the hope nor the means of any favourable conclusion. Nothing being left for treaty, where, as a preliminary step, one party is required to concede every thing, and all compensation from the other is absolutely and at once precluded. His majesty's servants have, however, observed, that in the conclusion of your lordship's conference with the French plenipotentiaries on the subject of the Note in question, the president of that mission informed your lordship, that it was not intended to resist all compensation for the immense extent of restitution demanded from his majesty, and for the other obvious circumstances of disadvantage to this country in the situation of Europe, as resulting from the war; and even added, that he and his colleagues would eventually bring forward proposals on this head for the deliberation of the king's government. It appeared possible that some advantage might perhaps arise to the great object of peace, from grounding on this declaration a farther proceeding, such as might afford to the Directory (if they are so disposed) the means of replacing the negotiation on a more practicable footing. With the view therefore of leaving nothing untried which can contribute to restore peace on any suitable terms, his majesty has been pleased to direct that your lordship should for that purpose ask another conference with the French plenipotentiaries. In this conference your lordship will remark in such terms as the occasion must naturally suggest to you upon the indefensible spirit and tendency of the demand now made by France. You will observe that France, treating in conjunction with her allies, and, in their name, cannot with any pretence of justice and fairness, oppose her treaties with them as an obstacle in the way of any reasonable proposal of peace in which they are to be included. In a separate negotiation, to which they were not parties, such a plea might, perhaps, have

been urged; but in that case France would have been bound to offer, from her own means, that compensation which she did not think herself at liberty to engage to obtain from her allies. And such was, in fact, as your lordship must remember, the principle on which his majesty offered to treat last year, when he was really bound, by engagements to Austria similar to those which are now alleged by France. But it never can be allowed that France, Spain, and Holland, negotiating jointly for a peace with Great Britain, can set up, as a bar to our just demands, the treaties between themselves, from which they are at once able to release each other whenever they think fit.

You will further remark, that even if, contrary to all reason, such a principle could for a moment have been admitted on our part, still even that principle, inadmissible as it is, could only apply to public treaties, known to those who agreed to be governed by them, and not to secret articles, unknown even to the French plenipotentiaries, or concealed by one of them from the knowledge of the others.

You will add in explicit, though not offensive terms, that the whole of this pretence now set up by France is incontestably frivolous and illusory; being grounded on a supposition of a state of things directly contrary to that which is known really to exist. It being perfectly notorious that both Spain and Holland, so far from wishing to continue the war, were compelled by France to engage in it, greatly against their own wishes; and to undertake, without the means of supporting it, a contest in which they had nothing to gain and every thing to lose. It never therefore can be allowed to be a question of any possible doubt, but that the Directory, if they really wish it, must already have obtained or could at any moment obtain, the consent of those powers to such terms of peace as have been proposed by his majesty. If, however, France, from any motive of interest or engagement, is in truth desirous to procure for them the restitution of possessions which they were unable to defend, and have no means to re-conquer, the project delivered by your lordship afforded an opening for this; those articles having been so drawn as to leave it to France to provide a compensation to his majesty, either out of her own colonies, or out of those of her allies, respectively conquered by his majesty's arms. The choice between these alternatives may be left to the Directory; but to refuse both is, in other words, to refuse all compensation. This is nevertheless expressly declared not to be the intention of those with whom you treat. It is therefore necessary that your lordship should demand from them a statement of the proposals which, as they informed you, they have to make, in order to do away this apparent contradiction, which the king's servants are wholly unable to reconcile by any sug-

gestion of theirs, even if it were fitting and reasonable for them to bring forward any new proposals immediately after the detailed project which was delivered on the part of this country at the outset of the negotiation.

Since that project is not acceded to, we have evidently, and on every ground, a right to expect a counter-project, equally full and explicit on the part of the enemy. You will therefore state to the French ministers distinctly, that the only hope of bringing this business to a favourable conclusion is, by their stating at once plainly, and without reserve, the whole of what they have to ask, instead of bringing forward separate points one after the other, not only contrary to the avowed principle of the negotiation proposed by themselves, but as it appears, even contrary to the expectation of the ministers themselves who are employed on the part of France. There can be no pretence for refusing a compliance with this demand, if the plenipotentiaries of France are disposed to forward the object of peace; and the obtaining such a statement from them is, as I have before stated to your lordship, a point of so much importance, in any course which this negotiation may take, that it is the king's pleasure that your lordship should use every possible endeavour to prevent their eluding so just a demand.

After what has passed it is, I fear, very doubtful whether such a counter-project would be framed on principles such as could be admitted here; but it would, at all events, place the business on its real issue, and bring distinctly into question the several points on which the conclusion of peace, or the prolongation of war, will really depend.—I am, &c.

(Signed) GRENVILLE.

No. 24.—DISPATCH from lord Grenville to lord Malmesbury; dated Downing-street, 20th July, 1797.

My lord;—There are two separate points on which it is necessary for me to say a few words to your lordship, in addition to the instructions in my other dispatch, on the general subject of the negotiation.

The first relates to the assertion of one of the French ministers, that the Portuguese ships and troops were at Toulon. The fact is very immaterial as to any conclusion that could be drawn from it, to affect the situation or just claims of the court of Lisbon; because your lordship well knows, that it is a principle universally recognised in the public law of Europe, that when one of the parties, in a defensive alliance furnishes to his ally the stipulated succours, those succours remain entirely at the disposal of the requiring party to be employed wherever he shall judge proper, subject only to the limitations of the treaty which before existed; and if the amount of those succours is not increased beyond that engaged for, nor the means of using them extended by new facilities, the party furnish-

ing the stipulated assistance is not understood to violate the laws of neutrality.

But the fact, in this case, would not bear out the assertion, even if the argument to be drawn from it were more conclusive. The troops of her most faithful majesty having been, as I apprehend, no otherwise employed than in the two campaigns carried on by land, upon the southern part of the frontiers of France and Spain.

The other point relates to what was said to your lordship about the treaty of Pilnitz. It would certainly not require much argument to prove that the renewal of several treaties enumerated by name and date, and the latest of which was concluded in 1783, does not imply a renewal of another treaty supposed to be concluded in 1791. But what is more material to the present case is, that your lordship should take this opportunity to explain, in the most distinct and unequivocal terms, that if any secret treaty was in fact concluded at the interview at Pilnitz, between the late emperor and the king of Prussia (which is, to say the least, very doubtful in point of fact) this at least is certain, that his majesty was no party to such treaty; and not only was not then included in it, but has never since adhered to it, nor even been apprized of its contents. The public declaration which was made at that interview, shows on the face of it that his majesty was no party to it; and it is indeed, notorious that it applied to circumstances which were done away long before the war broke out between Austria and France, and that the subsequent negotiations for the maintenance of peace between those powers turned on points wholly distinct from those supposed to have been referred to in the pretended treaty of Pilnitz.

This explanation, however little connected with the present negotiation, seems to be called for by the allusion made to you upon the subject; and, indeed, on a point on which so much misrepresentation has prevailed, it is useful not to omit the opportunity of stating the facts as they really are.—I am, &c.

(Signed) GRENVILLE.

No. 25.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 25th July, 1797.

My lord;—I have the honour to acknowledge your lordship's dispatches, No. 19 and 20, of the 20th instant, which were delivered to me on Saturday, the 22nd instant, by the messenger Major.

It was impossible that the claim brought forward in the note inclosed in my No. 9, could have produced on your lordship's mind any impression different from that which you describe, and I am happy to find that the conduct I observed, when it was first delivered to me, was such as put it in my power to execute with great consistency, the spirited instructions your lordship now sends me.

Immediately on the arrival of the messen-

ger, I proposed an interview with the French plenipotentiaries, and we met on Sunday the 23d, at one P. M.

I could not obey his majesty's orders in a manner more likely to command attention, and to impress those who heard me with a just sense of the mixture of firmness and moderation with which his majesty was pleased to conduct this important negotiation, than by employing not only the substance, but as far as was practicable in conversation, the very words of your lordship's dispatch, No. 19; and if I should attempt to relate minutely what I myself said in this conference, it would in fact be little more than a repetition of them.

I began by observing, that I was certain the French plenipotentiaries must be fully prepared for what now I had it in command to say: I reminded them that I had taken upon me to affirm when we were last assembled, and immediately before I dispatched my messenger, that the requiring such a preliminary as that proposed in the note, was putting an end at once to all negotiation, and that I was sure peace on such terms would not be heard of; that the orders I was then about to communicate to them would prove that I had not made this assertion lightly, or in consequence of any hasty opinion of my own, at the same time that it would also appear that my royal master was as anxiously and as sincerely inclined to listen to all reasonable and admissible conditions, as he was determined to repel and reject all such as were of an opposite description. I then, my lord, took up my arguments on the precise grounds set forth in your lordship's No. 19. I neither omitted any thing, nor inserted any thing of my own, which could at all alter its spirit; and I only varied from the letter inasmuch as was necessary to make it applicable to a conference.

My first object was to state, in as forcible a way as possible, the utter inadmissibility of the pretension set forth in the note, the frivolous and illusory reasons alleged for bringing it forward, and I observed that, if it was persevered in, it must lead to this necessary conclusion, that there did exist when it was framed an intention on the part of the Directory to break off the negotiation in the outset. My second object in point of reasoning, though a very primary one in point of importance, was either to prevent the negotiation breaking off at all, or if this was not to be prevented, to endeavour to be so clear and explicit in my language, and to draw the line so distinctly between such sacrifices as his majesty might be inclined to make in order to restore so great a blessing as peace, and those to which the dignity of his crown and interest of his subjects would never allow him to attend, as to make it impossible that by any future cavil or subterfuge the interruption of the treaty, if unfortunately it should be interrupted, could be imputed to any other cause

than the exorbitant demands of the French government; and the better to insure this purpose, I explained to them that his majesty having already in a detailed project stated freely and fully his conditions, and these conditions having been at once rejected by a sweeping claim on the part of the French government, it was not fitting or reasonable, neither could it be expected that any new proposals should originate with his majesty: and that on every ground the king had a right to expect a *contre-projet* from them, stating at once plainly and without reserve the whole of what they had to ask, instead of bringing forward separate points, one after another, directly contrary to the principle on which we had agreed to begin the negotiation, and which, from their being insulated, could only tend to protract and impede its progress.

On the first point, on the inadmissibility of the preliminary conditions as proposed by the French government, one of the French plenipotentiaries said, it was impossible for them to do more than to take it for reference, that the instructions they had received when the Directory sent them the note, were precise and positive, and that they had received none since. He therefore had on that point simply to request of me, that I would state in writing the several grounds on which his majesty rejected this proposition, in order that the report transmitted by them to the Directory might be correct; and he assured me, that if I did not think it proper to put in writing all the arguments I had used to them in the conference, they would have no scruple of employing those I omitted in such a way as was the best calculated to give them weight, and to use the French minister's own expression, to place the negotiation once more on its legs.

In regard to the second point, he had no hesitation in agreeing with me, that the best method, and indeed the only one, which could accelerate the whole of the business, was for them to give in a *contre-projet*, neither did he attempt to disprove our perfect right to expect one from them before we made any new proposals. But he said that it was not necessary for him to observe, that as long as they were bound by their instructions not to give way on the proposition I had now so decidedly rejected, that it was impossible for them to move a step without new orders from the Directory; that they would ask for these orders immediately, and lose no time in acquainting me when they were received.

I observed, that in our last conference he had intimated to me they were empowered to come to some explanation with me on the subject of compensation to be made to his majesty for the great cessions he was disposed to make; that, at the time, I conceived these explanations were of a nature to qualify the wide claim stated in the note, and that if I had abstained from pressing him further at

the moment, it was from perceiving a reluctance on their part to bring them forward:—That, however, if they really had such proposals to make me, and if they were of a nature to meet in substance and effect the basis laid down in the project I had given, I should be well disposed to listen to them.

One of the French ministers, after some hesitation, and a short silent reference to one of his colleagues, said he thought as matters now stood, it would be much better to wait their answer from Paris:—that it was a very important period, a crisis in the negotiation, the result of which probably would be conclusive as to its fate, and that it seemed to be of more consequence to make this result as conformable to what he hoped I was convinced were as much their wishes as mine, than to waste our time in discussions which were useless, not to say more till this was ascertained.

I confined myself in my reply to saying, I had no objection whatever to giving to the French plenipotentiaries, a paper, stating the strong motives on which his majesty rejected the proposition made in their note of the 15th; and that as I, on my part, had considered it a duty to make my reports as conciliatory as was consistent with truth and correctness, so I heard with great pleasure the assurances he gave me of their intending to observe the same line of conduct.

That as we seemed perfectly agreed as to the propriety of their producing a *contre-projet*, I had nothing to say on that point, except to express my most sincere wish that it would soon appear, and when it did appear, be such a one as would lead to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion of the negotiation.

No. 26.—NOTE from lord Malmesbury to the French Plenipotentiaries; dated Lisle 24th July, 1797.

The minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic Majesty has transmitted to his court the note which was delivered to him the 15th of this month, by the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic; and having received the orders of the king his master, on this subject, he hastens to repeat to them, in writing conformably to the desire which they have expressed to him, the following reflections, which he had already stated to them, verbally in consequence of his most positive instructions.

He observes, in the first place, that to require “as an indispensable preliminary of negotiation for peace with England, the consent of his Britannic Majesty to the formal restitution of all the possessions which he occupies, as well those of the French Republic, as further and formally those of Spain and the Batavian Republic,” is to wish to establish a previous condition which excludes all reciprocity, refuses to the king all compensation, and leaves no object of ulterior negotiation.

That the French Republic, formally autho-

rized by its allies to negotiate the articles of peace in their name, cannot fairly set up its partial treaties with them, in opposition to reasonable proposals of peace, since it is universally understood that the contracting parties always preserve the power to modify, by mutual consent, the conditions by which they may be engaged to each other, whenever their common interests may require it;—consequently, the proposition made to the king of a general and gratuitous restitution as an indispensable preliminary, would necessarily impute to his Catholic Majesty, and to the Batavian Republic, dispositions far less pacific than those which animate the French Republic.

That moreover in consequence of what passed in the first conferences, lord Malmesbury has always thought himself entitled to expect that the king his master would find a compensation for the sacrifices he was ready to make for peace, by retaining a part of his conquests; and he was the less able to foresee any obstacle, on account of the secret articles of the treaties which bind the French Republic, as the principle of compensation was acknowledged by a formal and positive declaration, made in the name of the executive directory, and communicated in an official note, dated the 27th of November 1796; a declaration, posterior to the completion of those treaties.

It was, therefore, in order to remove as much as possible, every difficulty that, in the project of a treaty, which lord Malmesbury has delivered to the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic, the alternative was left to France to settle this compensation on its own possessions, or on those of its allies. But the absolute refusal of this alternative appears to do away the only possible means of conciliating every interest, and of arriving at an honourable, just, and permanent peace.

Lord Malmesbury, persuaded that such cannot be the intention of the French government, hopes, that in consequence of the reasons herein stated, a condition will not be insisted upon, to which his Britannic Majesty can by no means consent.—He again requests the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic to accept the assurances of his high consideration.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 27.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, Sunday, 6th August 1797.

My lord;—I fully expected, when I received the enclosed note on Friday, that the conference proposed was to acquaint me with the instructions the French plenipotentiaries had received from the Directory, on the note I had given in near a fortnight ago, as an answer to that in which the restitution of the whole of his majesty's conquests from each of his enemies is required as an indispensable preliminary to all negotiation.

I was therefore surprised and disappointed, when I had taken my place at the conference, to hear from the French plenipotentiaries that the letters they had received that morning from Paris did not bring any specific reply to my last note, but only went to inform them that the Directory had taken the subject into their most serious consideration, and would acquaint them as soon as possible with the result.

I could not avoid expressing my concern and surprise, that there existed any hesitation whatever in the mind of the Directory on a point, which, although a very important, was certainly a very simple one:—That to allow it to remain in doubt whether his majesty was to have any compensation or not; was in other words to leave it in doubt whether the Directory sincerely meant peace or not:—And that although I was very far from wishing, for any improper haste, or not to move in a matter of such magnitude with becoming prudence and deliberation, yet I could not forbear lamenting that more than a month had now elapsed without our having advanced a single step, notwithstanding his majesty had, in the very outset of the negotiation manifested a moderation and forbearance unprecedented under similar circumstances:—that anxious as I was not to prejudice it by any representations of mine, I must say, this delay placed me in a very awkward position, as I really did not perceive how I could account for it in a way at all satisfactory, at the same time that it was quite impossible for me to suffer a longer space of time to pass over without writing to my court.

One of the French plenipotentiaries expressed his earnest wish that I would write immediately; he was confident this delay would be seen in its true light; and added, “Si nous n'avancons pas à pas de Géant j'espere que nous marchons d'un pas sur.”—And another of them repeated this phrase.

I expressed my sincere hope this might be the case, but it would have been much better proved by the communication of the counter project they had in a manner pledged themselves to procure, than by any vague and indeterminate assurances of what might possibly be the result of the present suspension of all business. They observed to me that the counter project would of course be (virtually) contained in their next instructions, and that their only motive for wishing to see me was, to convince me that this delay had neither originated with them, nor been occasioned at Paris by any want of attention to this important business, or from any cause not immediately and closely connected with it.

I desired to know from them when they thought it probable they should receive positive and explicit instructions, whether in three, four, or five days?—They said, it would be probably eight or ten.—And one of them observed, that as our not meeting more frequently gave rise to many idle rumours and

false reports, he would propose to me, if I had no objection, to meet every other day at two o'clock:—That it was very possible that in our next two or three meetings we might have not thing material to say, but that we should get better acquainted with each other, and in our conversations mutually suggest ideas which might be of use.—I readily consented to this.

I had a conference again this morning. As I was very desirous of being enabled to transmit to your lordship some more satisfactory account as to the motives of this delay, I again pressed the French plenipotentiaries on this point. They each of them repeated what they had said before, and on my endeavouring to make them feel how impossible it was that his majesty should not be hurt at this demur on so very simple a point, one of them said, you ought to augur favourably from it; your note was a refusal to agree to what was stated by the Directory in their instructions to us as a *sine qua non*:—If the Directory were determined to persist in this *sine qua non*, they would have said so at once—"Je vous assure qu'il nous auroit promptement renvoyé le Courier," were his words:—The time they take to deliberate indicates beyond a doubt that they are looking for some temperament, and it scarce can be doubted that one will be found.—I said I was well pleased to hear him say this: but that still he must be aware that it would not be an easy task for me to make my dispatches to day either interesting or satisfactory.

Another of the French ministers said, that he really believed that this would be the only great impediment we should have to encounter, that every thing would go on quickly and smoothly, and that I must admit the present to be a very important and difficult point in the negotiation. I agreed with him entirely as to its importance, but could not acquiesce as to its difficulty.

I am very sorry, my lord, that in such a moment, and after waiting so long, I should not be able to send you more explicit and decisive assurances; but it is not in my power to compel the French negotiators to move on faster. All I can do is by my conduct and language to take care that no part whatever of the imputation of delay should attach to me. I have, at every conference I have held, always declared my readiness to proceed, and I shall not fail to repeat this every time we meet.

No. 28.—NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle 17 Thermidor 5th Year (August 14, 1797).

The ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic will be happy to have an opportunity of conversing for a few minutes with lord Malmesbury; and they have in consequence the honour of proposing to him to meet them at two o'clock to-day, or at any other hour which may be more convenient to him, and which

he will have the goodness to appoint. They renew with pleasure, to lord Malmesbury the assurances &c.

(Signed) LE TOURNEUR
HUGUES B. MARET.

No. 29.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville, dated Lisle 14th August 1797.

My lord:—In consequence of the resolution we had come to, to meet on the days of the arrival of the post from Paris, our conferences for this last week have taken place regularly every other morning except on Thursday the 10th of August, which being the anniversary of one of their national festivals, the French legation could not attend.

I have in mine, No. 17, given your lordship an account of every thing which passed in these conferences up to that of the 6th. On the 8th nothing was said at all worth transmitting, except an intimation flung out by one of the French plenipotentiaries, that it would be necessary to take into consideration the rights of neutral nations on this occasion. But as he spoke very vaguely, and in general terms, I did not choose to press him for an explanation as I consider it more judicious to avoid discussions on separate and collateral points, and not to enter into negotiation till the whole can be brought under deliberation at once.

What passed on the 12th was rather more interesting. The return of Mr. Wesley afforded me a very natural opportunity of expressing the impatience with which an answer to my last note was expected by my court; that three weeks had now elapsed since its transmission, and that although I by no means wished to insinuate, that due attention had not been paid to so very important a subject as that on which we were treating, yet I could not but greatly lament that day after day should be allowed to pass away without our proceeding at all in the great business for which we were met. One of the French ministers said, that it was impossible I could lament this delay more than they did: that they had already declared to me that it was occasioned by a wish not to create but to remove difficulties; and they could assure me positively, that the French government had no other object in view, and that I should find, when once we began fairly to negotiate, we should proceed very rapidly.

I replied it was indeed very material to make good the time we had lost. The French minister answered, you would not call it time lost, if you knew how it was employed. On my expressing, by my manner a wish to be informed, he went on by saying, we will not scruple to tell you, though we feel we ought not yet to do it officially, that we are consulting with our allies; that we have communicated to them all that has passed here; we have stated that, unless they mean to continue the war, they must release us from our en-

gements, and enable us, to a certain degree to meet your proposals.

The conference of to-day is this moment over. One of the French plenipotentiaries informed me, that he had received this morning a letter from the president of the Directory assuring him that in four or five days they would receive their final instructions; and he added of himself, that he trusted these would be such as would enable us to continue our work without any farther interruption. I said, I hoped these instructions would be in substance a counter project, as I did not see how any thing short of one could enable us to proceed so rapidly as he described. He agreed with me entirely, and assured me, that both he and his colleagues had repeatedly stated the necessity of a counter project being sent them; and he observed, that he really thought the French government might have foreseen every thing which had passed, and been prepared with one; and that this would have saved a great deal of valuable time. As I could not myself have said more, I readily gave a full assent to what I heard:

No. 30.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Grenville to lord Malmesbury; dated Downing-street, 19th August, 1797.

An expression mentioned in one of your lordship's last dispatches to have fallen from one of the French plenipotentiaries, leads to the presumption that it is intended, on the part of France, to bring forward some proposal about the navigation of neutral powers in time of war. Your lordship will best judge of the proper opportunity of expressing his majesty's decided and unalterable resolution on this point, not to admit of any proposal for treating with his enemies on the subject of the rights or claims of neutral powers.

The only other remark with which I have to trouble your lordship by this messenger relates to an expression in the late message of the Directory to the Council of Five Hundred, which, if literally taken, conveys an accusation against his majesty's government, that some delay has arisen on the part of this country in the negotiations at Lisle. This is so avowedly contrary to the fact, that it must be considered as impossible that such a charge could be intended to be made by a government which had at that moment delayed for three weeks making any answer to his majesty's distinct and liberal proposals of peace, and whose plenipotentiaries were daily apologizing to your lordship for this unbecoming, and as they almost confess, unaccountable delay; but as the point is too important to be left unnoticed, it is the king's pleasure that your lordship should present a note, remarking upon the sense to which these words are liable, expressing your persuasion that such cannot be the intention with which they were used, but asking on the part of your court an explanation to that effect, which cannot be refused without a

violation of every thing which truth and justice require on such an occasion.

No. 31.—EXTRACT from the Message of the French Directory, to the Council of Five Hundred, of the 9th August, 1797.

In short this cause is in the same despondency in which all good citizens, and particularly the defenders of the country are, at seeing deferred at the very moment when its conclusion was thought to be near at hand, and after having bought it with so much blood and so much suffering—a definitive peace, which the heads of the vanquished coalition at length solicited in good earnest, when its conclusion was expected, and which a government, friendly to humanity, were still more earnest to conclude: when, all on a sudden, buoyed up with new hopes, reckoning upon a general dissolution of the government by the failing of its finances, upon its destruction, upon the death or banishment of its bravest generals, and upon the dispersion and loss of its armies, these very same coalesced powers have thrown as much delay into the negotiations, as they had shown anxiety to bring them to an end.

No. 32.—DISPATCH from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 22nd August, 1797.

My lord;—in my conference of this morning, I took an opportunity of remarking to the French plenipotentiaries on the very unfair and extraordinary assertion which had appeared in the message of the 9th instant, from the Directory to the Council of Five Hundred, viz. “que les puissances coalisées ont mis autant de lenteur dans les negociations, qu’elles avoient montré de l’ardeur pour les terminer.” I observed to them, that I had orders from my court to ask a precise explanation, whether this accusation of delay was meant to apply to the manner in which his majesty had conducted the negotiation at Lisle, and if it was so meant to declare that no accusation was ever more destitute of foundation, nor a wider deviation from the real fact. I said I was perfectly ready to abide by their determination on this point, convinced that it was impossible for them not to acknowledge that the delay (if there had been any blameable delay) rested with the French government, and not with his majesty. The French plenipotentiaries admitted this to be most strictly true; that the phrase I had quoted was an ill-judged one, and “mal redigée;” but that it could not in any point of view whatever be construed as applying to England; and they were ready to say, that when it was written, the Directory alluded solely to the court of Vienna; that they could assure me they had been very faithful in their reports, and that when they said this it was saying in other words that I had carried on the negotiation with as much expedition as possible, and that if it had proceeded slowly

for this last month, the slowness arose on their side, and not on mine.

I said I could not for an instant call in question their feelings on this point; it was the insinuation conveyed in the message, and which had gone over Europe, that it was necessary for me to clear up, and to know whether the Directory thought and felt as they did. One of the French ministers, with very strong expressions, assured me the Directory certainly did think and feel like them; that no unfair or insidious allusion was meant, and added, "*que ce message étoit fait pour stimuler les conseils.*" I went on by observing it was very essential for me to have this fully explained, and that I should give them in a note to this effect; they requested I would not, it would lead to disagreeable discussions, and would not answer the end I proposed. They would take upon themselves now to assure me in the name of the Directory, that nothing at all similar to the construction I put on the phrase, was intended, and that as soon as they could receive an answer to the report they should make of to-day's conversation, they would say the same from the Directory itself.

I hope, my lord, I have, therefore, by obtaining this very precise and formal disavowal of an intention to fix any imputation of delay on his majesty's government, fulfilled the object of my instructions on this particular point. If when the French plenipotentiaries speak from the Directory the disavowal should not be equally satisfactory and complete, I then will not fail, according to your lordship's order, to give in a note.—I have the honour to be, &c. (Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 33.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 22d August, 1797.

The four conferences I have held with the French plenipotentiaries, since I last wrote to your lordship on the 14th instant, will not, I fear, furnish very interesting materials for a dispatch.—Our conference of this morning was principally employed in what I have related in my other dispatch; but the French plenipotentiaries assured me, that by Thursday, or at the latest by Saturday, they expected to receive their long expected messenger.

No. 34.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 29th August, 1797.

I am extremely sorry to be forced to announce to your lordship, that fresh delays occur in the progress of negotiation.—The French plenipotentiaries informed me at our conference yesterday, that the last answer from Holland was so unsatisfactory, that the Directory had ordered the minister for foreign affairs to return it to the Dutch ministers at Paris; that the Dutch ministers could not take upon themselves to alter it in the way the Directory proposed, but

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had been obliged to refer to their government for new orders; and that therefore, supposing no time to be lost in deliberation on this subject at the Hague, it would be at least a week from to-day before any farther account could be received here.

After lamenting this unexpected procrastination of our business, I expressed a wish to know what the Dutch answer had been, what objections the Directory had made to it, and the alteration they were desirous it should undergo.—One of the French plenipotentiaries said, it had not been communicated to them, but that he understood it was "*complexe, louche, et peu satisfaisante.*"—That the Directory expected it should be clear and distinct, and such a one as would enable them to send such instructions here, as would allow us to go on with the negotiation in a way to recover the time we had lost.

No. 35.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 5th September, 1797.

My lord;—I should have considered what has passed in our conference since I last had the honour of writing to your lordship by Mr. Wesley, as in itself too unimportant to authorize me to dispatch a messenger, but that in general I think it my duty never to leave your lordship more than a week without hearing from me; and I was also glad of an opportunity to acknowledge the receipt of your lordship's dispatch, No. 23, which was delivered to me by the messenger Shaw, on the 31st August, at 10 P. M.—Nothing but common conversation passed in our conferences of the 30th of August and of the 1st of September. In that of the 3rd the French plenipotentiaries confirmed what they had taken upon themselves to assure me on the 22d of August, in consequence of the representation I had your lordship's orders to make on the expressions employed by the Directory in their message of the 9th of August to the councils, and which expressions appeared to fix an imputation of delay on his majesty's government in the progress of the negotiation. They said that they had reported to the Directory what I observed on this subject, and that they were now charged to repeat what I had already heard from them, and to declare that no intention similar to that I supposed ever existed on the part of the Directory.—In our conference of this morning, although I had reason to expect that the answer from the Hague was arrived at Paris, yet it was not admitted by the French plenipotentiaries.

No. 36.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 9th September, 1797.

I need not say that the two conferences which have been held since I dispatched the messenger, Brooks, were not likely, under the present circumstances of this country, to

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afford any thing extremely important or interesting.—In that of Thursday the 7th, one of the French plenipotentiaries began, on my entering the room, by announcing a wish that the great event which had taken place at Paris, should not interrupt for a long time our negotiation, or destroy the pleasing prospect we had of its soon terminating successfully; and from his manner I clearly saw he meant to convey the idea that it was his opinion it would not. I endeavoured to discover whether he spoke in consequence of any private intelligence he had received from Paris, or simply from his own private judgment; and I found it was entirely from the latter.—In our conference of this morning, he said they were still without any letters from M. Talleyrand (which rather surprised him); but he could assure me, with certainty, that by Monday they should be empowered to go on with the negotiation, and that I might safely say so to my court.

No. 37.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Grenville to lord Malmesbury; dated Downing-street, September 11, 1797.

Your lordship's dispatches by the messenger, Shaw, were received here this morning. It would be premature in the present moment, to enter into any reasoning on the effect which the extraordinary events at Paris, may be expected to have on the important negotiation with which your lordship is charged. A very few days must now probably show, in the most unequivocal manner, what are the views which are entertained by the now predominant party at Paris, respecting the question of peace or war with Great Britain; and it becomes his majesty's government to wait the event with the same desire for accommodation on reasonable terms, and the same firmness, with respect to undue and insulting demands, which has actuated every part of the conduct held by your lordship.

No. 38.—DISPATCH from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 11th September, 1797.

My lord; on my going to the conference this morning, the French plenipotentiaries informed me that the whole French legation was recalled, and that Messrs. Treilhard and Bonnier d'Alco were appointed in their room. They said, their orders were to communicate this event to me immediately, and at the same time to add, in the name of the French government, that this alteration, in the choice of the negociators, would not produce any whatever in the disposition of the Directory, to bring the negotiation to a happy issue.—I assured them I was extremely sorry to hear that they were recalled. That we had hitherto acted together so cordially, that it was to be lamented any circumstances had arisen which made the French government think it advisable to put the negotiation into other hands.—That I received with satisfac-

tion what they told me as to the sentiments manifested by the Directory, relative to the negotiation, and that I could assure them, they were such as certainly existed in the breast of my royal master.—I then suggested to them, whether it would not be proper to give me an official note on this occasion, since it made a very marked period in the negotiation; and as they perfectly agreed with me on the propriety of this, they sent me that I now enclose.—I consider this event as so material, that I do not lose a moment in dispatching one of my servants to England, as I have at present no messenger with me.—I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 39.—NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle, 25 Fructidor, 5th year (Sept. 11, 1797).

The ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic have the honour to inform lord Malmesbury that they have received by this day's post, a decree of the Executive Directory, signifying their recall, and the nomination of citizens Treilhard and Bonnier to succeed them, and to continue the negotiations entered upon with England.—The minister for foreign affairs, in sending to the undersigned ministers plenipotentiary this decree of the Directory, of the 22nd of this month, orders them to wait the arrival of their successors. It also directs them to inform the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty, that the change of the negotiators does not carry with it any change in the disposition of the Directory, with regard to the negotiation. (Signed) LE TOURNEUR,
HUGUES B. MARET.

No. 40.—NOTE from lord Malmesbury to the French plenipotentiaries; dated Lisle, 12th September, 1797.

The minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the note which the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic have addressed to him, communicating the decree of the Executive Directory, which signifies their recall and the nomination of the ministers destined to succeed them, and to continue the negotiations already commenced. He receives at the same time with satisfaction, and will transmit without delay to his court, the assurance, that this change of the negotiators does not bring with it any change in the disposition of the Directory, as to the negotiation.—Lord Malmesbury, in thanking the ministers plenipotentiary of the French republic for this communication, begs them to be persuaded of his personal regret on account of their departure, and to accept the assurances of his high consideration.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 41.—EXTRACT of a Dispatch from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 17th September, 1797.

My lord; the new French plenipotentiaries, Messieurs Treilhard and Bonner d'Alco, with their principal secretary M. Derché, and two private secretaries, arrived here at five o'clock A. M. on Wednesday the 13th instant. At eleven A. M. they sent M. Derché to acquaint me with their arrival, and to inquire at what hour I would receive their visit. In consequence of my saying whenever it was convenient to them, they came immediately, attended by Messieurs Le Tourneur, Maret, and Colchen.

On taking leave, M. Le Tourneur came forward and said to me, in his name, and that of his colleagues, that they could not terminate their mission without expressing the satisfaction they had felt from the openness and candour ("loyauté et franchise") with which I had acted during the whole of the negotiation, or take leave of me, without expressing their sincere personal regrets; that the recollection of my conduct would always be agreeable to them, and that it had given me the strongest title to their esteem and good wishes.

After giving the new plenipotentiaries as much time as was necessary to return to their own house, I sent Mr. Ross to ask at what hour I might return their visit; and, in consequence of their answer, I went to them, attended by lord Morpeth and Mr. Ellis.

I took an opportunity of returning the compliment M. Le Tourneur had made me; and I must in justice repeat, my lord, what I have already said, that his conduct and that of his colleagues has, in every point which has depended on them, been perfectly fair and honourable, and in no instance contrary to the principles they announced, and the professions they made. It is therefore impossible for me not to regret them, and not to consider the change of negotiators at least as a very unpleasant, if not a very unfortunate incident.

No. 42.—DISPATCH from lord Malmesbury to lord Grenville; dated Lisle, 17th September, 1797.

My lord; I shall endeavour in this dispatch to give your lordship as circumstantial an account as my memory will allow me to do, of what has passed in the two conferences I have held with the new French plenipotentiaries.

In that of Thursday the 14th, after communicating to me the arrêté of the Directory appointing them to succeed Messieurs Le Tourneur and Maret, and empowering them to continue the negotiation with me, one of them began by making the strongest assurances of the sincere desire entertained by the Directory for peace. He observed, that if this desire had manifested itself so strongly at a moment when the two great authorities of the country were at variance, it must naturally become stronger and be exerted with more effect when all spirit of division was suppressed,

and when the government was strengthened by the perfect concord which now reigns between all its branches: that the first and most material point to be ascertained in every negotiation was the extent of the full powers with which the negociators are vested; that I should find theirs to be very ample; and that, as it was necessary to the success of our discussions that mine should be equally so, they had it in command to present a note the object of which was to inquire, whether I was authorized to treat on the principle of a general restitution of every possession remaining in his majesty's hands, not only belonging to them, but to their allies; that I was not unacquainted with their laws and with their treaties; that a great country could not on any occasion act in contradiction to them; and that, aware as I must be of this, I could not but expect the question contained in the note, neither could I consider the requisition of an explicit answer, previous to entering upon the negotiation, as arising from any other motive than that of the most perfect wish, on the part of the Directory, to bring it to a successful, and, above all, to a speedy conclusion.

I replied, that if after what I heard I could allow myself to hope for such an event as he seemed to think probable, or give any credit to the pacific dispositions he announced on the part of the French government, such hope must arise solely from the confidence I might place in his assurances; since the measure itself now adopted by the Directory was certainly calculated to make a directly contrary impression on my mind; that I could not conceal from him, that far from expecting such a question, its being now put surprised me beyond measure, and still more so, when from his comment upon it I was to infer, that he wished me to consider it as tending to promote a speedy pacification; that the question expressed in the note he had delivered (for he had given it to me, and I had read it over as he ended his speech) was word for word the same as that put to me by his predecessors so long ago as the 14th July; that on the 15th I had, from my own authority, given an answer, and that this answer I confirmed fully and distinctly by order of my court on the 24th July; that these notes had to the present hour remained unnoticed, and a delay of two months had occurred; that the reasons assigned for this delay were, as I was repeatedly told, a decided resolution on the part of the French government to listen to the reasonable proposals made by his majesty; but that being bound by their engagements with the court of Madrid and the Batavian republic, and wishing to treat their allies with due consideration, they were desirous of consulting with them previous to any positive declaration, and obtaining from them a voluntary release from those engagements sufficient to enable the French plenipotentiaries here to admit the basis his majesty had established, and to ground on it all

future discussions which might arise in the course of the negotiation: that if he had read over the papers left, undoubtedly, in his possession by his predecessors, he would find what I stated to be strictly true; and that of course it could not be difficult to account for my surprise, when, after being told that he and his colleague were to take up the negotiation precisely where they found it, it now became evident that it was to be flung back to the very point from which we started, and flung back in a way which seemed to threaten a conclusion very different from that he foretold.

I shall not attempt to follow the French minister through the very elaborate and certainly able speech he made in reply, with a view to convince me that the inquiry into the extent of my full powers was the strongest proof the Directory could furnish of their pacific intention, and the shortest road they could take to accomplish the desired end. It was in order to give activity to the negotiation ("activer" was his word) and to prevent its stagnating, that this demand was made so specifically; and he intimated to me, that it was impossible for the Directory to proceed till a full and satisfactory answer had been given to it. I interrupted him here by saying, their manner of acting appeared to me calculated to decide the negotiation at once, not to give it activity, since it must be known, I could not have powers of the description he alluded to; and even supposing I had, the admitting it would be in fact neither more or less than a complete avowal of the principle itself, which once agreed on, nothing would be left to negotiate about. The other French plenipotentiary interposed here, by saying, that would not be the case; many articles would still remain to be proposed, and many points for important discussion. I said, every word I heard seemed to present fresh difficulties. Without replying to me, the first-mentioned minister went on by endeavouring to prove, that the avowal of having powers to a certain extent, did not imply the necessity of exercising them; that it was the avowal alone for which they contended, in order to determine at once the form the negotiation was to take; that the note, and the time prescribed in it, were in consequence of the most positive orders from the Directory; and that if I drew from it a conclusion different from the assurances they had made me in the name of the Directory, I did not make the true inference. I replied, that although the prescribing the day on which the question was put to me as the term within which I was to give my answer to it, was both a very unusual and abrupt mode of proceeding, yet as a day was much more than sufficient for the purpose, I should forbear making any particular remark on this circumstance: that as to the inference to be drawn from the positive manner in which they appeared to maintain the question put to me, I really could not make it different

from that I had already expressed: that the reverting, after an interval of two months, to a question already answered, and which question involved the fate of the negotiation, certainly could not be considered as wearing a very conciliatory appearance: that in regard to my answer, it could not be different from that I had given before: that my full powers, which were in their hands, were as extensive as any could be, and it did not depend on me to give them more or less latitude: but that in fact their question went not to the extent of my full powers, but to require of me to declare the nature of my instructions; and on this point they certainly would forgive me if I did not speak out till such time as the circumstances of the negotiation called upon me to do it.

The French minister strove to prove to me, what he had before attempted, that the claiming a right of inquiry into the nature of the discretionary authority confided in a minister, by no means implied an intention of requiring of him to act up to its utmost limits. I observed, if no such intention existed, why institute the inquiry? and if it did exist, why not say so at once?—He said, what we now ask is little more than a matter of form; when you have given us your answer, we shall follow it up by another step, which we are ordered to take. I said, my answer was given two months ago; that, although I was ready to give it them again, and in writing, as one to their note, yet, as it could not be different, I did not see why they should not proceed immediately to the other step, by which I was told the question was to be followed up. It would be premature, said the French minister; but in drawing up your answer, do not forget the force of the arguments I have used, or in your report to your court, the assurances we have given of the earnest wish of the Directory to terminate the war.

I replied, that I still must maintain, that, from the manner in which they thought proper to define full powers, I could see no distinction between acknowledging the power and admitting the principle; and that the question itself could not be put with any other intention—(your lordship will observe from the subsequent notes which passed between us, that I was perfectly grounded in this assertion;—that in my reports they might be fully assured I should act up to that conciliatory spirit, which, from the earliest period of the negotiation, had always decided my conduct; and that, inauspicious as appearances were, I certainly would be careful not to make them look hostile. At the word hostile, both the French plenipotentiaries were most warm in their protestations, that nothing could be less so; that the idea of the negotiation breaking off was as far from their thoughts as from their wishes. I said, that although I heard this with pleasure, yet I could not avoid adverting to facts, and that, when instead of an answer, and the favour-

able answer which I had every reason to expect, I received only the repetition of a demand, which had been already satisfied two months ago; I certainly could not think this a good omen. If it did not bode an immediate rupture of the treaty, it assuredly did not announce a near and successful termination of it. The above-mentioned minister persisted I was mistaken; that the business would end speedily: that speed was their wish, and speed with peace for its object.

On breaking up our conference, I said, that I took it for granted that we should meet again at the usual hour on Sunday. He said, that it perhaps might not be necessary, but that they certainly would let me know in time; and this conveyed to me the first idea of what has since taken place.

I inclose your lordship the Note A, I received in this conference from the French plenipotentiaries, and the answer B, which I made to it yesterday morning at 10 A. M.

At 6 P. M. the note C was transmitted to me; to which at 8 P. M. I returned the answer D, by Mr. Ross, whom I sent in order that he might bring me the passports I asked for; but at a quarter before 10 P. M. M. Derché, secretary to the French legation, delivered to me the paper marked E; and this morning at 9 A. M. I replied by the note F, which immediately produced that marked G.

The notes sent me by the French plenipotentiaries speak for themselves; and it is unnecessary to enter into any reflections on them. I am willing to hope that the answers I have made were such as became the situation in which I stand, the importance of the cause intrusted to me, and the steady but temperate conduct which the spirit of my instructions injoin me to hold.

It was my wish to give every opening to the French plenipotentiaries to recall the violent step they had taken; and, if possible, to convince them of its extreme impropriety. And it was with this view, and with a most anxious desire not to exclude all hope of the restoration of peace, that I determined on suggesting the idea of our meeting once more before I left Lisle.

This meeting took place to-day at noon: I opened it by observing, that the several notes they had received from me since the preceding evening had been too expressive of the surprise I felt at the measure the Directory had thought proper to adopt, to make it necessary for me to enlarge upon it in this conference; and indeed my sole motive for suggesting that it might be for our mutual satisfaction that it should be held, was, because this measure appeared to me to be in such direct contradiction to the very strong assurances I had so constantly and repeatedly heard from them, and to the pacific intentions with which they declared they were sent, that it was my earnest wish (before I considered their conduct as forcing me to a step which must so materially affect the success

of the negotiation), to be perfectly certain that I understood clearly and distinctly the precise meaning of their official notes. On their admitting that nothing could be more reasonable than that I should, on so important a point, require explanation, or more satisfactory to them than to give it me (as far as lay in their power), I proceeded by saying, that it appeared to me that I was called upon to produce immediately my full powers, or rather my instructions (for however different these were in themselves, in their demand they seemed constantly blended), and that if either I refused to consent to this, or if on consenting to it, it was found that I was not authorized to treat on the principle they laid down, I was then in the space of twenty-four hours to leave Lisle, and return to my court; and that I was required to obtain full authority to admit this principle, if it was wished the negotiation should proceed. This I said appeared to me to be the evident sense of the notes, and I begged to know whether I had mistaken it or not. One of the French plenipotentiaries said, "You have understood it exactly; I hope you equally understand the intention of the French government, which is to accelerate peace by removing every obstacle which stands in its way."

I replied, that having no doubt left on my mind as to their exact meaning, and being quite sure notwithstanding the observation they had made, "*que j'avais saisi la véritable intention de leur note*," it would, I feared, be a very unprofitable employment of our time to argue either on the nature of the principle they announced as a *sine qua non* to even a preliminary discussion, or on the extreme difficulty of reconciling the peremptory demand with which they opened their mission, to the pacific professions that accompanied it: that if they were determined to persist in this demand, it was much better to avoid all useless altercation; and nothing in that case remained for me to do, but to ask for my passports, and to signify to them my intention of leaving France at an early hour the next morning. They said, they had their hands tied by an *arrêté* of the Directory, and were bound to observe the conduct they had followed by the most positive orders, and although we remained together some time longer, not a hint dropped from them expressive of a wish that, instead of going myself for new instructions, I should either write for them by a messenger, or obtain them by sending to England one of the gentlemen who are with me. I endeavoured by every indirect means to suggest to them the necessity of adopting some such modification, if they meant that their wishes for peace, in the expression of which they were this morning more eager than ever should meet with the slightest degree of credit: I again brought to their recollection that I was authorized to receive any proposal any *contre projet* they tendered to me, but that they must be aware that it was not pos-

sible for me to alter the orders I had received or to assume an authority with which I was not invested. I dwelt particularly and repeatedly on my being competent to take any thing they said for reference; but this availed nothing, except drawing from one of them a remark, that the full powers which authorized a minister to hear proposals were widely different from those which would enable him to accede to them; and that it was such full powers that the Directory required me to solicit.

An easy answer presented itself to this mode of reasoning; but I saw no advantage to be derived from prolonging a conversation, which, after the positive declaration they had made, could lead to nothing: I therefore ended the conference by declaring my resolution to begin my journey at a very early hour the next morning, and by saying, that immediately on my arrival in England I would make an exact report of every thing that had passed since their arrival.

I trust, my lord, I shall not incur censure for having declined to offer in distinct terms to wait at Lisle till I could know his majesty's pleasure on the peremptory proposal made to me: but when I considered the nature of the proposal itself, the avowal that this would not be the last, nor perhaps the most humiliating, condition required of us, and the imperious style with which I was enjoined to depart in twenty-four hours, it was utterly impossible for me to assume a language or affect a manner that could be interpreted into solicitation or entreaty: I felt myself called upon to treat the whole of this extraordinary proceeding with calmness and temper; and notwithstanding the deep and poignant concern I must feel at an event which I fear will remove all probability of an immediate pacification, I trust that in the expression of this sentiment I have not used a language unbecoming the character with which I am invested, or the greatness of the sovereign and country whose dignity and interests it is my primary duty to consult and to maintain.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 43.—(A.) NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle, 29 Fructidor, 5th year (Sept. 15, 1797).

The undersigned ministers plenipotentiaries of the French Republic, commissioned to treat of peace with England, have the honour to assure lord Malmesbury, minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty, that the French government wishes as sincerely, as strongly as ever, a peace, desired by the two nations; but, unable to conclude any other peace than such a one as is founded on the laws and on the treaties which bind the French Republic, persuaded that, to arrive at this end, it is necessary to explain itself with entire frankness, and desirous of giving to the

negotiation the greatest rapidity, the Executive Directory has expressly charged the undersigned to demand of lord Malmesbury, whether he has sufficient powers for restoring, in the treaty which may be concluded, to the French Republic and to its allies, all the possessions which, since the beginning of the war, have passed into the hands of the English.—The undersigned are equally charged by the Executive Directory to demand from lord Malmesbury an answer in the course of the day. They request him to accept, &c.

(Signed)

TREILHARD.
BONNIER.

No. 44.—(B.) NOTE from lord Malmesbury to the French Plenipotentiaries; dated Lisle, 16th September, 1797.

The undersigned minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty receives with great satisfaction the expression of the sincere desire for peace, which the ministers plenipotentiaries of the French Republic announced to him yesterday in the name of their government. He has the honour to assure them that the king his master is animated with the same desire, and has nothing more at heart than to put an end to the calamities of the war.—With regard to the question which the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic addressed to lord Malmesbury, concerning the extent of his full powers, he considers himself as having already given the most unequivocal answer upon this subject, in the two notes which he delivered to their predecessors on the 15th and 24th of July.—However, to avoid all misunderstanding, he renews the declaration, which he made yesterday; that is to say, that he neither can nor ought to treat upon any other principle than that of compensations; a principle which has been formally recognized as the basis of a treaty equally just, honourable, and advantageous to the two powers.

(Signed)

MALMESBURY.

Lisle, Saturday, 16th September,
1797, 10 A. M.

No. 45.—(C.) NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle, 30 Fructidor, 5th year.

The ministers plenipotentiaries of the French Republic, commissioned to treat of peace with England, have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the answer of lord Malmesbury to the note which was presented to him in the conference of yesterday.—It appears from this answer, and from the two notes of the 15th and 24th of July, to which it refers, that lord Malmesbury has not powers for agreeing to the restitution of all the possessions which his Britannic majesty occupies, whether from the French Republic, or from its allies.—In consequence, while they reiterate to lord Malmesbury the most positive assurances of the sentiments of the French government, the undersigned apprise him of

a decree of the Executive Directory, which signifies that, in case lord Malmesbury shall declare himself not to have the necessary powers for agreeing to all the restitutions which the laws and the treaties which bind the French Republic, make indispensable, he shall be to return, in four-and-twenty hours to his court, to ask for sufficient powers. Lord Malmesbury can see in this determination of the Executive Directory nothing else than an intention to hasten the moment when the negotiation may be followed up with the certainty of a speedy conclusion.

(Signed)

TREILLARD.
BONNIER.

No. 46.—(D.) NOTE from lord Malmesbury to the French Plenipotentiaries; dated Lisle, 16th September, 1797.

The undersigned minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic Majesty has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the note of this day, which has been sent him by the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic:—Whatever regret he may experience at seeing the hope of a speedy conciliation thus destroyed, he can return no other answer to a refusal so absolute to continue the negotiation on grounds which appeared to have been already agreed upon, than by demanding the necessary passports for himself and his suite, in order that they may set off within the four-and-twenty hours, and return immediately to England.

(Signed)

MALMESBURY.

No. 47.—(E.) NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle, 30 Fructidor, 5th Year (September 16, 1797).

The undersigned ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic, commissioned to treat of peace with England, have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of lord Malmesbury's answer to the note which they addressed to him this day.—They think it right to observe to him, that he does not appear to have seized the real meaning of their note; that it by no means contains refusal to continue the negotiations, but, on the contrary, the means for giving them activity, and for following them up with a success, no less desirable to the two nations, than it would be flattering to the ministers charged with the conduct of them.—The French government is so far from entertaining the intentions which the note of lord Malmesbury appears to impute to them, that the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic have received no order to quit Lisle after the departure of the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty.

(Signed)

TREILLARD.
BONNIER.

No. 48.—NOTE from Lord Malmesbury to the French Plenipotentiaries, dated Lisle, Sunday 17th September, 1797.

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The undersigned minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty has the honour to acknowledge the receipt of a note which the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic transmitted to him yesterday, through the hands of the secretary general of their legation. He thinks he cannot answer it better than by submitting to them in his turn the following observations.—That having already by his note dated July 24th, and in obedience to the express orders of his court, given an answer to the question which is now so unexpectedly renewed, a question, that in appearance relates solely to the limits of his full powers (which are in the most ample form) but which does in fact require a declaration of the whole extent of his instructions; and not being authorized to quit the place of his destination without the express orders of the king his master, in any case except that of the rupture of the negotiation; he could not help considering a note enjoining him, in consequence of a decree of the Executive Directory, to return to his court in the space of four and-twenty hours, as ill calculated to accelerate the conclusion of peace. Nevertheless to answer the assurances of the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic, and to testify his desire to seize their real meaning, with respect to which he should be very sorry to deceive himself, he thinks that it would be more satisfactory to meet once more; and if the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic should be of the same opinion, lord Malmesbury would propose that this meeting should take place at an earlier hour than usual, in order that he may have time to take such steps as the result of their conferences may render necessary. He desires the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic to accept the assurances of his high consideration.

(Signed)

MALMESBURY.

No. 49.—(G.)—NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury, dated Lisle, 1st Complementary Day, 5th Year,

The undersigned ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic, commissioned to treat of peace with England, have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of the note which the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty has transmitted to them this morning. Referring to the notes addressed to lord Malmesbury on the 29th and 30th Fructidor, and especially to the first of yesterday, they agree to the meeting which lord Malmesbury appears to desire, and propose the hour at noon. They request lord Malmesbury to accept &c.

(Signed)

TREILLARD.
BONNIER.

No. 50.—DISPATCH from lord Grenville to lord Malmesbury, dated Downing-street, 22d September, 1797.

My lord;—I have had the honour of laying

before his majesty your lordships dispatches in which you have given an account of the extraordinary conduct of the new plenipotentiaries of the French Republic, of the answers given by your lordship to their unjustifiable demand, and of your consequent departure from Lisle.—I have the satisfaction to be able to assure your lordship, that his majesty has been pleased to express his entire approbation of your lordship's judicious and temperate conduct in the unprecedented situation in which you were placed, and of the manner in which you expressed yourself, both in your official notes and in your conversations with the French plenipotentiaries, as well as of that in which you have conducted yourself during the whole course of the negotiation, which seems too likely to be now brought to its close.—As it appears, however, that some further answer will probably be expected by the French government to their late extraordinary demand, notwithstanding the full and conclusive reply given in your lordship's notes, I have received the king's commands to transmit to you the inclosed draft of a note, which it is his majesty's pleasure that your lordship should transmit to the plenipotentiaries at Lisle, by a messenger whom I shall direct to be in readiness for that purpose.

(Signed) GRENVILLE.

No. 51.—NOTE from lord Malmesbury to the French Plenipotentiaries dated, London, 22d September 1797.

The undersigned minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty has rendered to his court a faithful account of the circumstances that have interrupted the exercise of those important functions which his majesty had been pleased to entrust to him. His majesty has deigned to honour with his entire approbation the answers which the undersigned has already made to the extraordinary and unexpected demands which the new plenipotentiaries of the French Republic addressed to him immediately upon their arrival at Lisle.

But in order to leave no doubt respecting the nature and object of this demand, the undersigned has been expressly ordered to declare in the name of his court,

1. That the full powers with which his majesty had thought proper to furnish him for negotiating and concluding a treaty of peace, are conceived and expressed in the most ample form, authorizing the undersigned fully, and without reserve, to sign any treaty upon which he might agree with the French plenipotentiaries, whatever its nature and conditions might be; conforming himself in all cases to the instructions which he might receive from his court.

2. That these full powers have been received and recognized as sufficient, as well by the plenipotentiaries with whom he has hitherto treated, as by the Directory themselves, and

that there is consequently no room for any new discussion upon a subject which has already been closed by common agreement, and which moreover is not liable to any doubt or difficulty whatever; every thing which has been done hitherto upon this subject, being entirely conformable to customs long established and recognized by all the nations of Europe.

3. That the demand of the Directory therefore, in reality, refers not to the full powers of the undersigned, but to the extent of his instructions, of which the Directory could not, under any circumstances, require any communication, further than as the undersigned himself might judge such a communication conducive to the success of the negotiation; and that very far from being in a situation to be called upon for any new explanations whatever, the undersigned had every reason to expect, from the repeated communications which had been made to him by the French plenipotentiaries, that he should immediately receive a contre-projet of a nature to facilitate the further progress of the negotiation which had been suspended for more than two months.

4. That the court of London had good reason to be still more astonished at the substance of the new demand made to the undersigned; a demand relating to preliminary conditions which had already been rejected at the very commencement of the negotiation and from which the French plenipotentiaries had in effect departed, by a formal notification of the measures which the Directory were in consequence taking for the purpose of coming to some arrangement with their allies.

5. That it is therefore, only by consenting to treat upon the basis of the project, detailed with so much openness, which was presented by the undersigned a few days after his arrival at Lisle, or by returning a contre projet of a conciliatory nature, agreeably to the assurances which he received so long ago, that it appears possible to continue the negotiation, which the plenipotentiaries have so strongly assured him that the Directory did not wish to break off, notwithstanding the measures lately adopted with respect to him. A measure which the undersigned forbears to characterize, but which could not fail to produce in this country the impression of a disposition by no means pacific on the part of the Directory.

The undersigned is directed to add, that his majesty would see with real regret the certainty of the existence of such a disposition, so little compatible with the ardent desire with which he is animated to restore peace to the two nations; but that if, without having himself contributed to it on his part, he should again find himself under the necessity of continuing the war, he will conduct himself upon every occasion agreeably to the same principles, doing every thing which can depend

upon him for the re-establishment of peace but persisting to defend, with an unshaken firmness, the dignity of his crown, and the interests of his people.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 52.—NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury, dated Lisle, 4th Vendemiaire, 5th year (September 25, 1797).

The ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic, commissioned to treat of peace with England have received the note, dated from London, which has been brought to them by an extraordinary messenger from lord Malmesbury. They have the honour to answer to him, that their note of the 29th Fructidor to which they refer, offered the double assurance of the settled intention of the French government to continue the negotiations for peace, and of its constant determination not to agree to any other conditions than such as are compatible with the dignity of the French Republic.

A peace, of which the basis should be contrary to the laws or to the engagements taken with its allies, would never satisfy the hopes of the nation. It is a point from which the Executive Directory has never departed, and upon which its sentiments have never varied.

Lord Malmesbury having formally declared in his notes of the 15th and 24th of July, and in the last instance in that of the 17th of September, that he had not the powers necessary for restoring the Dutch and Spanish possessions, occupied by the troops of his Britannic majesty, the Executive Directory has given a new proof of its openness, and of its desire to accelerate the conclusion of peace, in requiring lord Malmesbury to return to his court, for the purpose of obtaining the authority, without which he cannot conclude; a measure rendered necessary by the declaration of the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty, and upon which it is impossible to give a wrong impression to any thinking and impartial mind.

(Signed) TREILHARD.
BONNIER.

No. 53.—NOTE from the French Plenipotentiaries to lord Malmesbury; dated Lisle, 10th Vendemiaire, 6th year. (October 1, 1797)

The ministers plenipotentiaries of the French Republic, charged to treat for peace with England, have the honour to inform lord Malmesbury, that having sent a copy of his last note to their government, the Executive Directory has directed them to declare in its name, that it has never ceased to wish for peace, that it gave an unequivocal proof of the sentiment which animates it, when it ordered the ministers plenipotentiary of the Republic to require a categorical explanation as to the powers given by the English government to its mi-

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nister plenipotentiary; that this demand had, and could have, no other object but to bring the negotiation to a speedy and successful issue:—That the order given to the plenipotentiaries of the Republic to remain at Lisle after the departure of lord Malmesbury, is another proof that the Directory had desired and foreseen his return with powers that should not be illusory, and the limitation of which should no longer be a pretext for delaying the conclusion of peace:—That such are still the hopes and intentions of the Executive Directory, which enjoins the ministers plenipotentiary of the Republic not to quit Lisle till the continued absence of the negotiator shall no longer leave any doubt of the intention of his Britannic majesty to break off all negotiation:—That consequently the 25th Vendemiaire (16th of October old style) is the period fixed for the recall of the ministers plenipotentiary of the French Republic, supposing that at that time the minister plenipotentiary of his Britannic majesty shall not have arrived at Lisle. The Executive Directory will feel the greatest regret, that a reconciliation already twice attempted, should not be perfected, but its conscience, and the whole of Europe, will bear it testimony, that it is the English government alone that will have inflicted the scourge of war upon the two nations.

(Signed) TREILHARD.
BONNIER.

No. 54.—NOTE from lord Malmesbury to the French Plenipotentiaries; dated London, 5th October 1797.

The undersigned having laid before the king's ministry the note of the plenipotentiaries of the French Republic, is directed to observe them.—That it is only in consequence of the formal and positive injunction of the Directory that he quitted Lisle; that his powers were neither illusory nor limited; and that nothing was omitted on his part to accelerate the negotiation, which has been only retarded by the delays of the Directory, and which at this moment is only suspended by its act.—With regard to the renewal of the conferences, the undersigned can only refer to his last note, where he has explained with frankness and precision, the only means which remain for continuing the negotiation; observing at the same time that the king could no longer treat in an enemy's country, without being certain that the customs established amongst all civilized nations, with regard to public ministers, and especially to those charged to negotiate for the re-establishment of peace would be respected for the future in the person of his plenipotentiary.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

Committee of Supply.] Nov. 7. Mr. Hobart having brought up the Report from the Committee on the motion, "That a Supply be granted to his Majesty,"

[3 Q]

Mr. Long moved, "That the House do agree with the Committee, *nem. con.*"

Mr. Tierney objected to it, and said, that while he had a voice it should not be allowed to pass so. If this was the usual way of passing the resolution, he perhaps would not object to it; but he was determined to give his negative not only to this, but to every other act of the present administration. He assured the House, that he had a general retainer for the whole session.

*Debate on Mr. Tierney's Motion, respecting the Office of the Secretary of State for the War Department.] Nov. 7. Mr. Tierney said:—*I rise, Sir, in pursuance of the notice, to state why I think the holding of a seat in this House by the right hon. secretary (Mr. Dundas) a most indecent, unlawful, and offensive proceeding. It is impossible but the House must recollect, that the charge which I hope to be able this day to bring home to the right hon. secretary was once before made against him,* and was baffled by the defence then set up; but, I may confidently predict, that the defence set up by the right hon. gentleman on that day will not be the defence he will stand upon now. The reason, Sir, why I speak upon this occasion in a style of apparent asperity is, not that I feel any private animosity towards the right hon. gentleman, but that I think the whole transaction of which I complain a most corrupt job—a job not avowed, but detected—a job that never would have been brought to light if it could have been kept in concealment, and which was at last brought to light only by the labours of the committee, to whose report I mean to refer for evidence of the facts on which I ground my charge. In that report, the transaction to which I allude is completely deciphered;† and

* See Vol. 31, p. 1003.

† Extract from the 16th Rep. Sel. Com. page 14.

"The office of secretary of state for the war department was first established on the 11th of July 1794; the whole business of the war department having, from the commencement of the war in 1793 down to that period, been transacted by Mr. Dundas, in addition to the ordinary business of the home department.—The necessity of a separate establishment for managing the affairs of war exclusively, was soon felt, and produced the present additional office of secretary of state for the war department." Sixteenth Report of the Select Committee.

when that shall be substantiated, it will be seen whether it is not an aggravation of the offence that the right hon. gentleman, after having been reminded of the doubts that arose, and thereby supplied with materials to judge of the law and to correct his error, has nevertheless presumed, after such a warning, to hold his seat in this House. Sir, many of the gentlemen who now hold seats in this House, were members of it in the year 1782, when a speech was made by a right hon. gentleman, now no more, for whose talents, when living, and for whose memory, now he is dead, I feel respect and admiration—I mean Mr. Burke. In that speech, which was itself sufficient to establish his fame, and which he made when he brought in a bill for introducing a system of economy in the public administration and for abolishing all useless places, that great man declared, that the measure he proposed was not merely intended by him to diminish the public expenditure, but had a more extensive view for the public benefit, namely, that of preserving as much as possible the independence of parliament. I state this circumstance, for the purpose of showing, that there is nothing personal in this motion, and of apprising the House what the provisions are which the law has, in this instance, made for the independence of parliament.

Sir, if you refer to that speech, as it has been since published by himself, I may with greater freedom allude to it here, you will find that Mr. Burke has treated the office of third secretary of state as an office perfectly unnecessary, and instituted for no other purpose than that of creating new patronage for the crown. Taking this as the principle upon which the abolition of that office was then grounded, nothing can be pleaded in justification of its revival but the most urgent necessity. Now, Sir, if I show you that this very office of third secretary of state has been revived, will it not be incumbent on ministers to show the House some circumstances that made its revival necessary, and to prove that it was not, as I contend, a job? Reverting to that speech, you will find Mr. Burke, after stating that lord Suffolk and lord Weymouth were the two secretaries of state for the northern and southern departments, goes on as follows: "Lord Suffolk, dead to the state, long before he was dead to nature, at last paid his tribute to the common Treasury, to which we must all be taxed. But so

little want was found even of his intentional industry, that the office, vacant in reality to its duties long before, continued vacant even in nomination and appointment, for a year after his death. The whole of the laborious and arduous correspondence of this empire, rested solely upon the activity and energy of lord Weymouth. It is, therefore, demonstrable, since one diligent man was fully equal to the duties of the two offices, that two diligent men will be equal to the duty of three. The business of the new office which I shall propose to you to suppress, is by no means too much to be returned to either of the secretaries which remain. If this dust in the balance should be thought too heavy, it may be divided between them both; North America (whether free or reduced) to the northern secretary, the West Indies to the southern. It is not necessary that I should say more upon the inutility of this office. It is burning day light. But before I have done, I shall just remark, that the history of this office is too recent to suffer us to forget, that it was made for the mere convenience of the arrangements of political intrigue, and not for the service of the state; that it was made, in order to give a colour to an exorbitant increase of the civil list; and in the same act to bring a new accession to the loaded compost heap of corrupt influence.”*

In the year 1783, the object of Mr. Burke was effected, the office of third secretary of state being abolished. Now, see what has happened since. On the 11th of July 1794, a third secretary of state, with a new establishment of not less than 13,000*l.* a year is created. When, in the year 1768, the office of third secretary abolished by Mr. Burke's bill, was established, the pretext was, the increase of business on the continent of America: at that time, however three secretaries were at least sufficient; but, having contrived to lose the American colonies which furnished the pretext, ministers could not very well insist on the continuance of the office, nor deny that there was no occasion for more than two, who went under the name of secretaries for the northern and southern departments. In 1786, commissioners were appointed to report the nature of the offices of government, and the amount of their salaries; they made an ample report, with a view to re-

trenchment; but nothing farther was done in it. In that report, the two secretaries were stated to receive nett incomes, the one of 4,766*l.*, the other of 5,334*l.* Now, Sir, if the labour, in consequence of the abolition of the third secretary, had become so extremely burdensome to the two which remained, would they not have been entitled to more salary? But so far was the chancellor of the exchequer from being of that opinion, that in 1783 he proposed to reduce their salaries to 4,500*l.* each. Nay, Sir, did not the right hon. gentleman in that very year evince, that so far from sinking under the weight of his office of secretary, he was able to carry a little more—with his usual purity and disinterestedness, taking upon himself the office of president of the board of control without fee or reward, and deprecating the idea of refusing to serve gratis? And yet, Sir, with this additional labour, the business of all the offices went on, and we heard no complaint of their being too laborious. Sir, the commission which was appointed in 1786 reported, that one under secretary in each office was fully sufficient, and that the clerks already employed were too many; but that, as there might one day or other be occasion for them, it would be advisable to keep them idle in the offices, in order to be ready, if circumstances should occur to render their assistance necessary. Nothing, however, was done touching the objects of the report, till 1795, when ministers thought proper to advise his majesty to counteract all that was promised; and, when the new establishment was proposed, those who were called upon for advice were the secretaries themselves—an odd quarter, indeed, from which to take advice on such an occasion! Sir, the right hon. gentleman has been heard to complain, that the weight of business which fell to his share was more than he could bear, and that he had no rest or respite, night or day; and yet, Sir, in his appointment in 1791, so far from taking even 4,500*l.* (for I really wish to give the right hon. gentleman all the credit he deserves) he only took 3,600*l.* Then, Sir, came the war in 1793; and although the quantity of business was considerably increased by that event, the right hon. gentleman never looked for a third secretary, but did the whole, with much credit to himself, for a year and a half, and, so far from not being able to discharge the duties of that office, he, in bringing in his India bill,

* See Vol. 21, p. 55.

took 2,000*l.* a year as president of the board of control—assuming to himself, deliberately, the whole additional weight of that arduous employment; and I am not willing to suppose that the right hon. gentleman would have asked for a salary for an office, the duties of which he had not leisure to perform. But this is not all, Sir. With the whole weight of the home department, he took upon him also that of the war; so far was he from thinking a third secretary necessary.—Under these circumstances, then, I wish to know, what it is that creates the necessity? It cannot be that which was made the pretext for it in 1768, for the colonies are lost: neither can it be inability, because it appears that the business has been done with dispatch, facility, and effect, by two. Hence, Sir, I am at a loss to guess why, in 1794, there should be a new division of the business, and, instead of the old establishment of two secretaries and offices at an expense of 29,000*l.*, there should be three at an expense of above 40,000*l.* I know, Sir, that in the report before us, the gentlemen have stated, that the accumulation of the affairs of war, with those of the other departments of state, rendered an enlargement necessary, and pointed out the expediency of a separate establishment for war: but when we look into the evidence upon which that assumption is grounded, we find that the first clerk of that office was the only person examined touching that point before the committee; and so far from saying any thing to justify that conclusion, he has said nothing but what leads to a belief, that, with the help of four additional clerks, they might go on as well as ever.

Sir, I think that I can hardly have failed to satisfy the House, that the office of third Secretary of State is unnecessary, and that the additional business occasioned by the war, which is made the pretext for creating it, might be with equal effect and advantage, discharged by four clerks, supplemental to those already employed; but this mode would not answer the purpose of ministers. No, Sir; an increase of the patronage of the crown was their object, and a new establishment, with enormous additional salaries, was the only thing that would serve their turn. When the necessity of forming a new establishment was discovered, many difficulties occurred in making the arrangement; and it might be an amusing subject of speculation to conjecture how they were at last

surmounted, as nothing can be conceived more difficult than to reconcile the jarring interests and sanguine expectations of the several candidates for emolument. The chancellor of the exchequer, who is so fond of “mutual compensation” in negotiation, probably interfered, and made mutual compensation the basis of the treaty; and hence may have arisen “reciprocal facilities.” It was only saying, “I am secretary at war, and you are war secretary,” and so the difficulty was at an end; and on that day out starts an arrangement, giving to the right hon. gentleman the office of secretary of the war department, with a most enormous establishment. Now, Sir, shall I not be justified in saying that this is a job? Is not the distinction warranted by the fact? I am at a loss to comprehend how such a palpable job can be defended. The present commander in chief is allowed to be most accurate, active, and industrious; and I am sure I mean no disrespect to lord Amherst when I attribute wholly to age his insufficiency: and lord Cornwallis has made no less improvement in the ordnance department: added to this, the secretary at war is in himself a host. And yet, with these advantages, the office of secretary of the war department was thought necessary for the right hon. gentleman! Sir, I do not find it so much as stated that the duke of Portland could not do the duty of both; and the duke’s department, instead of being reduced, has had four clerks added to it; one a precis, as it is called; that is to say, an abridger; another a law clerk, which was abolished in 1774, and now revived; a third, a clerk for felons and convicts; and the fourth, a gentleman (Mr. Baldwin) who left his profession, and is so good as to give his opinion when a case is sent with the usual compliment (the fee) marked on the back of it. Besides which, there is an active magistrate employed, who transacts the office business with the various magistrates, and takes the whole weight of that trouble off his grace’s shoulders. Sir, my knowledge of the duke of Portland enables me to state that he is a man of business; and being so, it is extremely wrong to proclaim him thus to the world as a man not fit for the discharge of the duties of his office.

So far, Sir, I have confined myself to the ground of necessity: I will now apply to the other point I assume, namely, the illegality of the office. Mr. Burke’s bill provided, that the office “commonly called

the office of third secretary of state, or secretary for the colonies (as it was then called), should be suppressed, abolished, and taken away; and that two only should remain—those for the northern and southern departments; and that if any office of the same name, nature, or description, should thereafter be established, it should be taken as a new office.” Now, Sir, I ask any gentleman of the law, whether words could be found to comprehend a larger explanation of the intention of that provision? Lord George Germaine, who held the office of third secretary, was more cautious than the right hon. gentleman; for he never gave any specific name to the office he held, but held it generally by the title of “one of his majesty’s principal secretaries of state:” and Mr. Burke was driven thereby to describe it in the manner he had done—that is to say, that there shall be only two secretaries; and that if a third be made, of the same name, nature, or description, with that abolished, the person who receives the same shall be incapable to sit in the House of Commons. Now, Sir, I will demonstrate, beyond the possibility of refutation, that the office held by the right hon. gentleman is of that nature and description: that it is of the same name, I cannot say; but it is for transacting the same sort of business as that which was called secretary for the colonies: it is not only new, but by the description of it in the report, may be said to grow out of that of lord George Germaine, and, like it, is created upon the pretence that the business of the home department is too heavy. Let gentlemen only look to the report, and they will find the three offices distinctly recognised by the authenticated signatures of the respective secretaries. In Appendix, B. 1, they will find the signature “Portland” as “principal secretary of the home department;” in B. 2, they will find “Grenville, principal secretary for the foreign department;” and then they will come to the strayed sheep, “Henry Dundas, principal war secretary!” For my part, I cannot comprehend where a doubt upon the subject can arise. It evidently appears that there are three secretaries; one of them is in the war department, and that is the right hon. gentleman. Perhaps gentlemen will endeavour to shelter him by saying, that it is the duke of Portland that is the new secretary; for certainly they cannot say it is lord Grenville. But it cannot be shuffled off in that manner;

if it can, Mr. Burke’s bill is but a farce from one end of it to the other. The report states the necessity of a separate establishment, and of an additional office of secretary of the war department, and that office the right hon. gentleman is avowed to hold. No doubt, then, can possibly arise on the subject. Gentlemen may say that the right hon. secretary has the same seal he had before; but that will make no difference, inasmuch as the seal constitutes a part of the nature of the office. But, Sir, the right hon. gentleman has not only a distinct office, but for that office a distinct house in Parliament-street, the lease of which he has bought for the purpose. Perhaps it will be said, that this is only a new division of the secretary’s office; but even that Mr. Burke’s bill is against: or it may be said, that the right hon. gentleman, being a commoner, possessed the office, and, cutting it into two parts, gave half of it to a peer, and doing so, has not forfeited his seat—as if the master of the Mint were to give generally the office to a peer, and reserve to himself, being a commoner, only the coining of sixpences.

Sir, I have only one word more. In the statement I have made, it is clear that no necessity for creating this office has been proved, and that if the necessity was proved, still, under the law, it is impossible the right hon. gentleman can retain his seat. Sir, in making this motion, I am not actuated by a desire to interfere with his majesty’s service, or to throw difficulties in the way of the public proceedings, but by an anxious desire to vindicate the honour and character of the House. And I recommend it to the right hon. gentleman, if he wants a new arrangement, to look to his friend on the right (Mr. Windham), who is at the head of an establishment of no less than 42,000*l.* a year, and to divide with him, rather than lay new exactions on the public. [A laugh.] Sir, I cannot see that it is a reasonable provocation to laughter to be told, that one man possesses an establishment of 42,000*l.* a year, or that another sits in this House who by law has no right to sit in it. Gentlemen should not choose this night for laughter; discretion should point out to them a conduct more becoming the times and their own situations. A gentleman the other night, lamented that there was not a fuller attendance on this side of the House; and it would be well if, before they indulge in unseemly, ill-timed levity,

gentlemen would consider whether laughter is the mode that should be taken to induce the attendance of absent members.— Mr. Tierney then moved :

1. " That the Office of the Secretary of State for the War Department was, in addition to the Offices of Secretary of State for the Foreign and for the Home Departments, first established on the 11th of July, 1794.

2. " That the right hon. Henry Dundas, secretary of state for the war department, was, by accepting the said office, rendered incapable of being elected to serve in parliament, and ought not to sit in this House."

The first Resolution being put,

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said :—The hon. gentleman, in introducing the present motion, has so particularly alluded to me, that it will be expected I should say something in reply ; and I conceive I cannot better show the impropriety of the measure he has proposed, than by giving an accurate statement of the circumstances to which he has directed the attention of the House. In 1791, his majesty was pleased to call upon me to undertake the office of secretary of state for the home department. At that period, the duty attached to the situation comprehended the internal correspondence with the different parts of the country, with Ireland, the colonies, and in general every thing relative to the executive administration. When the war broke out, the military correspondence was likewise conducted by this department, and there it continued till it was thought proper to form a new arrangement. I shall not now discuss, whether the extensive concerns which come under the administration of the offices alluded to, can best be conducted by two, or by three. Still, however, I should deem it unmanly, were I not to embrace this opportunity of stating distinctly, that the business of the office which is the subject of consideration, is more than it would be proper to commit to any individual, be his talents and his assiduity what they may. The increase of business arising out of the war, the new and strange scenes acted in various parts of the country, the frantic and dangerous designs to disturb the public tranquillity and to overthrow our happy constitution, called for an additional industry, and means of carrying on the business of the state with additional vigilance. On this point, however, I merely throw out my per-

sonal opinion. The only question for the deliberation of the House, is whether I am a third secretary of state in the terms of Mr. Burke's act? In reply to the arguments of the hon. gentleman, I shall boldly state the fact. In 1791, I received from his majesty the seals of the home department, and at the same time I was custodian of those which had belonged to lord George Germaine. A new arrangement having taken place, I carried the seals of which I had been the custodian to his majesty, who delivered them to the duke of Portland. I was then ordered by his majesty to continue the military correspondence, and to conduct the business of secretary of state, so far as related to this object. How, then, can I, in any respect, be considered the third secretary of state? I continued to perform a considerable part of the duty which had devolved upon me when I accepted the appointment in 1791. If two known and established secretaries of state existed, and another is added, by what kind of argument is it to be proved, that the person who discharged one of these offices is to be considered either as the new or the third secretary of state? It so happens, however, that none of the business which belongs to the office of third secretary, abolished by Mr. Burke's bill, is attached to the office which I now hold. The business which it comprehends is quite distinct from that for which a third secretary of state was deemed unnecessary, and is posterior to Mr. Burke's bill. In the situation which I received in 1791, I have stood since ; and am now only in possession of a part of that business which was then wholly under my care. The persons examined by the select committee explain the nature of the business transacted in the different offices, but do not attempt to distinguish who is first, second, or third secretary of state. The military branch, and the matters connected with it, are carried on in my department ; but I cannot conceive how this at all serves to establish, that I, who performed that duty before, must be the new secretary of state, or that I come under the incapacities which Mr. Burke's bill enacts. The name by which the office may be distinguished is of no consequence : it does not in any manner support the point which the hon. gentleman endeavours to prove. Does the fact justify the conclusions which he draws? Did I receive any new patent from his majesty for the office which I

hold? Did I receive any new salary? Certainly not. In no respect were the emoluments I enjoyed either increased or diminished; they stand precisely as they did before the new arrangement took place. I was then, and still am, one of the principal secretaries of state, while there are three to whom this character belongs, without its being at all specified with what particular department they are entrusted.—With regard to the operation of the bill upon which this motion is founded, it ought to be considered what is its spirit and object. It was intended to guard against the increase of public offices, in so far as those who occupied them were, or were not, to be members of this House. But because it suited the state of the civil list at the period when it was passed, does it follow that it must be applicable to the present times? It does not enact that a third secretary of state shall not be appointed; but its effect is, that this third secretary of state shall not be a member of the House of Commons. Before any change took place, I sat in this House; and I now claim the right, both on my own account, and from a regard for the privileges of my constituents, to exercise my legislative capacity. No change has taken place in my situation since I was first chosen after being appointed in 1791; but that part of the duty which I performed is now executed by the duke of Portland. Upon what ground, then, have I forfeited my right to a seat here? The friends of the hon. gentleman have some reason to complain of him, that he seems desirous to effect what they by their ingenuity could never attain. After the discussion which the subject has already undergone, I cannot but think, that my constituents would not be fairly dealt with, were they to see their representative declared to have incurred an incapacity by an act on which the opinion of the House had been already pronounced.—Mr. Dundas then withdrew.

Mr. *Martin* said, that whether or not the right hon. gentleman, by holding his present office of secretary of state, had violated the letter of Mr. Burke's bill, the spirit of it had been disregarded. Its object was, to guard against the influence of the crown, and to secure the independence of parliament; which object would, by the proceeding in question, be defeated.

Mr. *Tierney*, in reply, said:—The right hon. gentleman insists, that he is not

third secretary of state, because he was secretary of state before. Thus he argues, that, having once been in that capacity, he must ever retain the character as long as he lingers about any of the offices of state. If it be true that the right hon. gentleman has only a part of the duty, is he, in fact, any more than an officer of the duke of Portland's; and equally disqualified to sit in parliament, as coming under the exceptions of the 15th George 2nd? It is said, that the subject was formerly discussed. Now, however, circumstances are altered; here the job, which formerly was imperfectly known, is detected. In answer to the charge of thus holding the office of third secretary of state, we are asked, whether those who were in, or he who joins, is to be justly deemed the new secretary? But what does this prove? When the new arrangement was adopted, a break took place somewhere. A new division, it seems, has taken place. Doubtless, his majesty may divide the office into as many parts as he pleases, if he does not call upon this House for the payment of those who are employed. But the House can say to his majesty, "You can make placemen, but you cannot give places to members of parliament." His majesty cannot, by extending the number of principal secretaries, increase the number of under secretaries qualified to sit in this House. By the new arrangements, however, two members are made. It is said, indeed, that the under secretary takes no salary. Without any disrespect for that gentleman, however, he might change his mind, or others in his situation might differ from him. The statute of queen Anne creates an incapacity, whether the salary be received or not. No matter by what motive the hon. gentleman may be actuated; the incapacity is legally declared. Whether he is pleased to perform for nothing the business of the right hon. gentleman in the morning, to have the pleasure of hearing his eloquence in the evening, or whether he follows virtue for its own sake, is all one. It is against the admission of the principle that I now contend. It is not from personal motives; but it is to have an opportunity of bringing to the proof what is meant by the constitution, what is meant by enforcing obedience to the laws, that I urge the present question. The right hon. gentleman says, he will inquire whether the arrangement be necessary or not. But does he think the

country will be satisfied with this? Will they not see the gross insult they have received in the juggle with which it is attempted to impose upon their understandings? I am not very apt to despond. I believe the energies of the country to be great; that its resources are extensive; but they are not the resources of abundance; they can only be called forth by a House of Commons possessing the confidence of the people. If you show them that you are more disposed to curry favour with the king—if you show yourselves more disposed to employ a vigour beyond the law against the people, and a vigour less than the law in the vindication of their rights—you may vote grants, but they will be barren; you may impose taxes, but they will be unproductive. If you show a determination to enforce the laws equally against high and against low, then you will find in the people energies inexhaustible, and resources without end. The right hon. gentleman says, “prove me to be third secretary of state: I went with the seals, and delivered them to the duke of Portland.” Thus he endeavours to escape by a juggle: “Handy dandy! which is the justice, and which the thief?” The facts on which I rest this charge, however, are founded upon no quibble. The two departments for home and foreign affairs are known. Since 1794, there has been a secretary for the war department. The whole matter, then, is reduced to a quibble, whether Mr. Dundas or the duke of Portland be the new secretary; and because the duke came last into office, it must be inferred, forsooth, that he is the new secretary! but the law does not ask who is the officer, it looks at the office; and if the new officer is found in the old department, and the former secretary in an office hitherto unknown, it cannot be difficult to decide which of them is to be held as the new secretary of state. The 6th of Anne is expressly against any person holding a new office; and the question here is, not whether Mr. Dundas is an old officer, but whether his office is a new office? That the point is one which admits of doubt, ministers cannot but acknowledge. If it be an object of discussion, why not get the matter decided by an act of parliament? This was done in regard to bounty-money when a doubt arose on Mr. Burke's bill. This, at least, would shield the House from the disgrace of sanctioning a gross violation of law. The defence

now attempted is at once injurious to the rights, and insulting to the understandings of the people; a miserable juggle to defeat an act of parliament intended to control the influence of the crown, and to secure the independence of the House of Commons.

Mr. Pitt said:—The statement of my right hon. friend is not fairly liable to the observations which the hon. gentleman was pleased to make, by way of anticipation, upon it. My right hon. friend says “Here are three secretaries of state, two of them existed before; another is added. Who is the third, either of the former two, or the one who is added to them?” This is precisely the case which we are now debating; nor is it possible fairly to state it otherwise, unless it could be proved that each office of secretary of state has, not by custom and convenience for practical purposes, but by law, a particular designation, department, and division. I say the office of secretary of state has no such department, designation, or division by law, but is, in the legal sense, independent of any such distinction. The office of secretary of state, in the legal sense, depends upon the grant and the delivery of the seals. The title of the office is, “One of his majesty's principal secretaries of state.” By that grant, and the delivery of the seals, every one of these persons becomes a legal organ to countersign any act of state, and he is placed afterwards in that department of business, which his majesty thinks fit to allot for him. This has been uniformly the practice, nor is there any limitation of the number of secretaries of state; they have frequently been of different numbers. In that case, we stand now as we originally stood. The hon. gentleman relies much upon the language of the last report of the committee, and triumphantly concludes from thence that my right hon. friend is a third secretary of state. To which I answer, that the language of the report, and that of the clerks who gave their evidence before the committee, is taken merely from popular acceptance, and has no reference whatever to the real and legal definition of the office. How is this office of secretary constituted? By the grant by his majesty and the delivery of the seals. Has my right hon. friend any new grant since the year 1791? No. Have any new seals been delivered to him? No. He has now the old seals and the old grant. I say, then, that according to the spirit of the

act of the 6th of Anne, my right hon. friend has not forfeited his right to sit in this House. Indeed, the hon. gentleman had one more reason to support his proposition—The bill brought in by Mr. Burke stated, that the office of a third secretary of state, or of secretary to the colonies, should be deemed a new office. My right hon. friend had nothing whatever to do with the colonies—and therefore, the hon. gentleman might conclude that he should be deemed secretary to the colonies. But after all, what is the spirit of Mr. Burke's bill? It is not a bill to restrain the creation of offices generally, nor to prevent his majesty even from having a third secretary of state by name: but it states, that if a third secretary of state, or of the plantations, be added, such secretary shall not sit in the House of Commons. Now, who is the third secretary of state? A member of the House of Lords. Gentlemen may say, that the act to which I am alluding was passed with a view to prevent his majesty's influence from being extended in the council of the nation, and that the third secretary ought to have no seat in the House of Lords any more than in the House of Commons: To which I answer, that we must look at what the law is, not what some gentlemen may think it ought to be. In a word, this appears to me a case in which there is no doubt; and if the hon. gentleman thinks it would have been arrogant in him to have brought this subject forward, without some new ground to support it, the sentence is one which he has pronounced on himself.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. Tierney - - - }	8
	{ General Tarleton - - }	
NOES	{ Mr. Burdon - - - }	139
	{ Mr. Elford - - - }	

So it was resolved in the negative. The second Resolution was negatived without a division.

Vote of Thanks to Lord Duncan for the Victory over the Dutch Fleet.] Nov. 8. Lord Duncan being in his place, the lord chancellor, in pursuance of the order of the House, gave his lordship the thanks of the House as follows, viz.

“ Lord Viscount Duncan;—I am commanded by the lords to give your lordship the thanks of this House, for your able and gallant conduct in the brilliant and decisive victory obtained over the

Dutch fleet on the eleventh day of October last; as well as for the zeal, courage, and perseverance, which you have uniformly manifested during the arduous period in which you have commanded his majesty's fleet in the North Sea.

“ At the same time that this vote passed unanimously, their lordships were pleased to order, that all the peers should be summoned to attend the House on the occasion: a distinction unprecedented, but called for by the general admiration your conduct has inspired, and strongly expressive of that peculiar satisfaction which the peers must feel upon your lordship's promotion to a distinguished seat in this House.

“ Splendid in all its circumstances as the victory obtained by his majesty's fleet under your command has been, important as it must prove in its consequences to the security of all his majesty's dominions, and, under the divine blessing, to the favourable issue of the arduous contest in which they are engaged; the magnitude and lustre of these considerations have not so occupied the observation of the Lords as to make them unmindful of the constant vigilance with which your lordship had, in the whole course of your command for three successive seasons, watched and frustrated every design of the enemy; nor the manly fortitude with which you had sustained the temporary defection of the greater part of your force; nor, above all, that undaunted resolution with which, at so momentous a crisis, you proceeded to check and to control the presumptuous hopes of the enemy.

“ These are merits in which fortune can claim no share; they spring from that energy of mind and that ardent love of your country which has directed your own conduct, and animated the officers and men under your command, to those exertions which are entitled to every testimony of public gratitude and applause.”

Lord Duncan replied as follows:

“ My Lords;—Not accustomed to speak in public, though my feelings are great, my words must be few. Deeply impressed as I am with the high honour this right honourable House has been pleased to confer on me, I shall only say, that I acknowledge it with the most profound respect, and feel much gratified by it. To you, my lord, my best thanks are due for the very flattering and polite manner you have been pleased to convey to me the resolutions of this House.”

The Duke of Clarence moved, that the speech of the lord chancellor, together with lord Duncan's, be entered upon the Journals ; which was ordered accordingly.

Debate in the Lords on the Papers respecting the Negotiation for Peace with France.] Nov. 8. The order of the day for taking into consideration the Papers respecting the Negotiation for Peace with France being read,

Lord Grenville said ;—I am persuaded, my lords, that the consideration of the papers, which by his majesty's directions have been laid before the House, can inspire but one sentiment in every breast. I am persuaded that every man must feel that the honour and the safety of the country admit but of one line of conduct. We are not called upon now to bear our testimony to any merits, however high, nor to bestow respect and attention where respect and attention are most due. We are called upon to discharge a duty of a more extensive kind, and of more general importance. We are called upon to perform a most solemn act of deliberation, and to follow it up with a pledge of most sacred obligation. I hope before any noble lord gives his assent to this pledge, that he will weigh maturely the consequences to which it leads, and the ties which it imposes. I am convinced that such is the light in which the measure I am about to propose will be viewed by every man within these walls, and that the impression which the perusal of these papers has left in my mind are indelibly fixed in every heart. If there are any noble lords who have absented themselves upon this occasion, I am convinced that they cannot have remained singular in the opinion they have formed upon the transactions to which these documents allude, and that if they have withdrawn themselves, it is because they are unwilling to acknowledge what they no longer have the confidence to deny.—Such being my conviction of the temper and sentiments of the House, it will not be necessary for me to detain your lordships long with any remarks upon the papers on your table, or with much argument to enforce the propriety of the address which I shall propose. It will not be necessary for me to follow the documents through all their details, to point out the inferences which they naturally present. Every one of your lordships must feel that there is something in the general aspect more con-

vincing than even the certain conclusion arising from the whole details. The general complexion of the enemy's conduct, the undisguised views which they entertain, speak more strongly than any collection of insulated facts.

In calling your attention, therefore, to the papers before your lordships, I shall not trouble you with minute detail. I shall not dwell upon the conduct of the enemy, even in the very commencement of the late negotiation. Although by the preliminaries of peace solemnly agreed upon between them and the Emperor, both parties obliged themselves to invite their respective allies to meet in a general congress to settle a preliminary peace, this agreement was openly violated. In the passport which was sent over for the person whom his majesty was to send to treat, the form was a direct and intentional departure from positive agreement, from all decency and established custom. It expressly guarded against the idea of a preliminary peace, and without any purpose but that of a perfidious determination to throw every obstacle in the way of peace, limited the negotiation to a defensive peace. I shall pass over with equal contempt the base and unworthy insinuation which, in the early part of the correspondence of the French government was thrown out against the character of the person whom his majesty had chosen to conduct the negotiation. That noble lord has shown, that, if any proof were wanting, if any pledge were required of his talents and his fitness for managing the great concerns which were confided to his care, no man could be found who could better support the dignity of his own character and protect the interests of his country. His conduct in the whole of the arduous task which devolved upon him ; his whole life spent with honour in a public situation, evince at once the merit of the choice, and the malignant motives of the accusation. But even from this pitiful insinuation may be gathered the temper which the enemy brought into the negotiation, and the catastrophe which they were desirous to produce. Eager to rake up every article of former difference, every point of former contest, they gave proof at once of the new difficulties which they would raise, and the new grounds of animosity which they would excite.

I come now to the negotiation itself. I will not dwell on the unexampled liberality of the conduct of his majesty in directing,

almost in the first interview between the plenipotentiaries, a full and detailed plan to be given in of the terms upon which he was willing to conclude peace. The paper is upon your table, read and determine for yourselves on its nature and its character. Examine and compare it with the representation given of it by the enemy in a paper from high authority, and published in an official paper. I shall not make any remarks upon the indecency [of the mode which the enemy adopted to make known to the world what they wished to be considered as a statement of the terms and conduct of the negotiation. It showed, however, the contempt which they entertained for their country and for the negotiation, and every appearance of decorum, when they could think it sufficient to treat such a subject with levity. Judge then, whether his majesty has thought proper to sport thus with the interests, with the anxiety, and with the feelings of the country. Judge if he has thus attempted to withhold the satisfaction which it was natural for the public to expect upon an event of such importance. His majesty has laid before his parliament the whole of the documents, and on these he desires you to judge. Read the papers on the table, and say, whether the projet they contain be a "projet in blanks," or whether it be a full and fair statement of the terms to which his majesty was willing to agree as the basis of the negotiation? This projet, however, being delivered, the French government found itself placed in a situation of considerable embarrassment. No answer was returned, however, because this would have disappointed the schemes which the Directory then pursued. Had they been serious in their wishes to facilitate the conclusion of peace, would they have brought forward the topics which they brought into discussion? Would they, without any purpose, have started the points of his majesty's title as king of France—the restoration of, or a compensation for, the ships taken at Toulon—or a renunciation of the mortgages of this country upon the Netherlands?—Without dwelling upon these topics, which sufficiently display the temper of the enemy, I now come to the great point on which the failure of the negotiation turned. Although at the beginning of the negotiation this demand had been abandoned, they again renewed the proposal which had been declared inadmissible, the com-

plete renunciation of every thing which had been taken during the war from them or their allies. They would not enter into any discussion of the projet delivered by lord Malmesbury, nor did they want to see whether the terms proposed by this country would admit of any modification by mutual facilities and mutual compensations. I will not now deliver any opinion how far this was admissible, or to what extent it would have been wise. At this moment the House must see how improper it would be to enter into that question. The enemy, however, did not stop for any information of this kind; they demanded, as a preliminary, to renounce all that we had to ask, and to declare all that we were ready to concede. In such a stage, and upon such a demand, it would not merely have been folly in any man to have acceded to the proposal. Nay more, I do not hesitate to assert, that it would have been direct treason in any minister to have complied with a demand so derogatory to the honour, and so fatal to the interests of his country.

The motives by which the majority of the Directory were actuated in the course which they pursued, it will not be difficult to explain. It will easily be recollected in what circumstances, amidst what violence, the French constitution of 1795, overthrown by the revolution of the 4th of September was established. It will be recollected under what military violence the first elections were conducted. In no sense was any freedom of election permitted till about April last, when a very considerable change in the temper of the councils, as well as in the people at large, was apparent. A majority in the legislative bodies seemed disposed to put an end to the miseries under which the country groaned, to remove the evils of which some of them had been the authors, and to cancel the crimes of which many of them had been guilty. They wished to restore some degree of public order and tranquillity to the unhappy people of France; for their former happiness, alas! they could not restore. They wished to oppose the progress of that revolutionary principle which the Directory endeavoured with too much success to spread over Europe. They wished to check the ravage and devastation which the war nourished and protracted. They were desirous to enjoy happiness in peace. These views, however, ill suited with the schemes of the majority of the Directory. They wished

to spread confusion over Europe, to prolong the miseries of their own country on Jacobin principles and by Jacobin means. Had the majority of the Directory then, by whose influence the whole of the proceedings at Lisle were conducted, chosen to break off the negotiation upon the terms which this country offered, they would have put the councils upon their guard, they would have made all France and Europe the judges of their conduct, and they would have anticipated that event which they were preparing. Again, had they brought forward another projet of their own, they must have disappointed the object they had in view—that of breaking off the negotiation without specifying any terms. At the very moment, however, when they were practising every evasion, creating delay, constantly refusing to deliver in a counter-projet, they held a language directly opposite in their messages to the councils. In these they threw the charge of delay upon the coalesced powers; and to whom could this insinuation apply, but to this country in conjunction with its ally? At this very moment their plenipotentiaries were daily apologising for the extraordinary delays which took place. In these circumstances does it not most plainly appear, that delay was their object, that they wished to gain time till their plot was ready to be executed, and till it would be safe to throw off the mask? In their views they unhappily succeeded by the weakness of their enemies, and the frail fabric of the constitution of 1795 was overturned. Had they broke off the negotiation abruptly before this period, they would have defeated their own object. It was clear to every man who watched the progress of events and of opinion in France, that it was not at Lisle, but at Paris, that the result of the conferences would be determined. It was obvious that it must depend upon the result of the disputes which agitated the councils of the government. It depended upon the decision of the struggle; and if the majority of the Directory succeeded every man was prepared for what followed. Perhaps, indeed, this forms the only excuse which his majesty's ministers could urge for having so long submitted to the delays and evasions of the enemy. They could only be justified by their desire to wait an event which might promise a favourable result to the negotiation and facilitate the attainment of peace. This consideration

alone shields them from the reproach of having so long endured the trifling and the evasion of the enemy, and contributed to aid the fatal deception which the Directory wished to pass upon the people of France, by keeping up the appearance of negotiation and cherishing the hope of peace.

When at last the revolution of the 4th of September arrived, the Directory immediately changed their system, and avowed their objects. They immediately recalled the men whom they had formerly instructed to support their views, and whom they had authorized to make professions which they no longer meant to perform. Every thing which had been done was retracted, and demands required which two months before had been abandoned. But it is needless to enter into a detailed exposition of their conduct. Their present avowed objects explain their former chicanery. They now show without concealment the purposes for which the disguise had been assumed. They now declare that it is our constitution, our laws, our religion, with which they war; that it is the whole system of our public glory and of our private happiness that they wish to overthrow. They avow that the government of this country and that of France cannot be co-existent. They wish not peace with this country, but the utter annihilation of our government, and the destruction of the whole scheme of our political existence.

With such avowals, I confess, I am at a loss to conceive in what manner the conduct of the enemy can now be palliated or excused. I well know, indeed, that every measure of the French government in its relation to this country, finds much more able and ingenious apologists here than in France. I know that even what seems too flagrant for defence, too manifest for ingenuity to colour, is justified by much more plausible arguments, and placed in much more favourable lights, than the talents of the friends of the Directory on the other side of the water can produce. But, my lords, aware as I am of this, I cannot divine from what sources their defence can now be drawn. I know not what new voluminous pamphlet will issue from the pen of any advocate, to justify the proceeding of the enemy, and to censure ministers for refusing to accept the proffered grace of the Directory. I know not upon what ground we shall be accused of maintaining the old and esta-

blished forms of our government, and for disdaining to submit the people of England to the yoke of a savage and ferocious government, and to the brutality of a licentious and sanguinary army. I shall not detain you with anticipating any objections to the conduct which ministers have observed, or to the measure which I am about to propose. I am convinced that it is the sentiment of every breast in this assembly, that the terms to which the enemy would have reduced us were such as no Englishman could sanction. I am sure that every man who hears me is convinced that it is no moment of humiliation. The day upon which the noble lord whom I see in his place, has received the thanks of the House, no man can think a period when the dignity and honour of the nation ought to be sacrificed. The resources of this country are great and powerful; and hitherto there has been no pressure to call them in all their vigour into action. Every man must now see, however, that upon the issue of the present contest depends, not only whether this country shall exist any longer as an independent nation, but even exist as a nation. Every man must see that public and private happiness, the honour, the dignity, every thing that is dear to individuals, even life itself, depend upon the issue of the struggle we have to maintain. Every man in this assembly in particular, knows that his property and his existence are at stake. But with the interest of the first class of men in the state, the happiness of the lowest is connected. The horrors, the persecutions, the sufferings to which the first orders in France were doomed, were spread over all. I will venture to assert, that the French revolution has been the source of more calamity to the lower classes than even to the unhappy nobility, whom we every day see groaning under those evils which they so little deserve. This too, I will venture to assert, is the sentiment with which the public at large are inspired. They are convinced that every thing they hold most dear depends upon their exertions to defend the honour and dignity of the country. They feel that a vigorous effort is required to secure that honourable peace which can alone maintain the sources of their happiness; that there is no safety without resistance, no hope but in courage and magnanimity. I have the fullest confidence in the public spirit and the determined disposition of the people of this

country. From you, my lords, I only ask that you will persevere in the sentiments you have expressed, and in the conduct you have pursued. I ask you to carry to the foot of the throne the declaration of this resolution, and that you will give a solemn pledge of your determination to perform the obligation you incur. From those only, I again repeat, who have fully and maturely considered the nature and the consequences of the step they take, do I require this pledge. It is a solemn and important measure which involves too much and extends too far to be adopted without deliberation. Having said thus much, my lords, I shall conclude with moving the following Address:

“Most gracious Sovereign;—We, your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in parliament assembled, having taken into our most serious consideration the Papers which your majesty has been pleased to direct to be laid before us, on the subject of the negotiation into which your majesty had entered with the view of restoring to your people a secure and honourable peace. In every stage of that transaction we have recognized your majesty’s invariable and unremitted solicitude for our prosperity and welfare; while we have seen, on the other hand, the most abundant proofs of the continuance of that spirit of inveterate animosity and desperate ambition, on the part of our enemies, in which the present contest first originated. Your majesty’s conduct, characterized by an unexampled moderation, openness, and consistency, has left to the enemy no means of evasion, no subterfuge of disguise or artifice. It can no longer be denied that their conduct is actuated by a fixed determination of excluding all means of peace, and of pursuing at all hazards, their hostile designs against the happiness and safety of these kingdoms. Even the vain pretence of pacific dispositions is now abandoned, and the real purpose of all their councils, and all their measures, is at length openly and publicly avowed. It is to our laws and government that they have declared their irreconcilable hatred. No sacrifice will content them but that of our liberty, no concession but that of our envied and happy constitution.

“Under such circumstances, we feel the duty which we owe, in this great crisis, to God and to our country. Animated by the same sentiments which your

majesty has been pleased to declare to your people, and to the world; attached to your majesty by principle, duty, and gratitude, and sensible that it is only from courage and firmness that we can look either for present safety or permanent peace, we are determined to defend, with unshaken resolution your majesty's throne, the lives and properties of our fellow subjects, the government and constitution of our country, and the honour and independence of the British empire. We know that great exertions are necessary; we are prepared to make them: and placing our firm reliance on that Divine protection which has always hitherto been extended to us, we will support your majesty to the utmost, and stand or fall with our religion, laws, and liberties."

The Earl of *Darnley* said, he approved, of the moderation, as well as dignity, with which the late negotiation had been carried on, on our part; and censured that of the French for its duplicity. Their conduct had left us no alternative; we had either to crouch to the enemy, or prepare for a vigorous prosecution of hostilities, until she was disposed to accede to a secure and honourable peace. There was nothing, in the relative situation of the two countries, which justified despondency on our part. We were prepared to meet any attack which the enemy might make on us, even if our invincible navy had not entirely done away any apprehension on that head. Thus circumstanced, we had nothing to fear. The resources of the country were adequate to the contest; and, in these views, he looked for the most perfect unanimity amongst their lordships.

The Address was carried *nem. diss.* Lord Grenville said he thought the address ought to be made as solemn an act as possible. He therefore wished it to be presented to his majesty as the joint address of both Houses. With this view he moved, "That the said address be communicated to the Commons at a conference." —Ordered.

Debate in the Commons on the Papers respecting the Negotiation for Peace with France.] Nov. 10. The House proceeded to take into consideration the papers respecting the Negotiation for Peace with France; and also the Address of the Lords, communicated at the conference; and the said papers and address being read,

Sir *John Sinclair* began by stating, that the object for which he offered himself to the House was, to move an Amendment to the Address. The reasons that had induced him to make such motion, were not objections to the general tenor, but to the peculiar phrases and words which were to be found in that address. The object of it was a system of endless and perpetual warfare; of warfare with a country with which the nation had been long at war, but with which they must at last be happy to be upon terms of amity and peace. Before, however, he submitted his amendment, he begged to be indulged in some remarks upon the papers laid before the House. He confessed himself perfectly astonished at the mean and degrading manner in which ministers had carried on the negotiation. When the renewal of overtures for peace was first talked of, he had meant to move, that no plan should be delivered to the French government until the latter should have prepared their counter-plan. That he had refrained from making that motion afforded him now much regret. He had declined it, however, from an idea that was entertained, that it might tend to impede the negotiation about to be undertaken. But what had been the consequence? Ministers being left to themselves, had carried it on in the most disgraceful manner. If gentlemen referred to the declaration, they would find it there acknowledged upon what principles the negotiation had been conducted; they were told, that it was begun against the customs and usages established in the intercourses of different nations; and that it was carried on when every idea of moderation and justice on the part of the enemy had been abandoned. What must be the effect of this? Must not such a mode of conduct tend to the debasement of the country? And would it be easy to revive the spirit of the nation after it had been so humbled? To the Declaration he objected, because it was full of rash and violent invective. Its object was, to establish between the two countries inveterate and lasting animosity. To justify this inveteracy, indeed, government had brought forward various charges against France, which they had by no means been able to make out. In perusing the papers on the table, he found it complained of, that the French had adduced frivolous and offensive preliminaries. He found that the first of these preliminaries was, the aban-

donment on the part of his majesty of the title of king of France; a point, surely, scarcely worth contending for; the second was, the restitution of the ships taken at Toulon, or an equivalent for them: the third was, the abandonment of the mortgage upon the Low Countries. The House were also told, as the foundation of this address, that the French had demanded terms which were absolutely inadmissible. Happy, indeed, should he be to agree with the address, if in his conscience he could do so; but in the papers before the House, the country were told that the French ministers had said, the requiring of powers to such an extent as they had mentioned did not necessarily imply that such powers were to be exercised. If, as it had been positively asserted, the French government had really no desire of making peace, they surely took a great deal of pains to act contrary to that desire. They received the British minister with great willingness. They sent their own ministers to wait for the English one; and even after the latter had withdrawn from Lisle, they still kept their ministers there. The House were also told, that it was the wish of the people of France to overturn the government of this country. If, indeed, such were the disposition of the French people, he should give his hearty assent to the address. But if the French were inveterate against this country, it was because this country had been inveterate against them. If they wished to overturn this constitution, it was because ministers had evinced a desire to overturn theirs. The French people would be glad to let us alone, and to be at amity and peace with us. On these grounds he rose to move an amendment, the object of which was, to announce to France and to the world, the firm resolution of the House to maintain the honour and dignity of the crown, and the independence of the people; to avoid saying any thing which might imply inveterate and implacable animosity; and to declare, that when France would agree to peace upon just and honourable terms, this country would immediately evince her readiness to treat. He then moved the following amended Address:

"We your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, beg leave to return your majesty our most humble and hearty thanks for your gracious communication of the papers respecting the

late negotiation entered into with the government of France.—When we consider the various calamities to which nations in a state of hostility are necessarily exposed, we cannot but deplore the continuance of a war which has already occasioned such an expense of treasure and of blood to the powers engaged in it; and we join most heartily in applauding your majesty's humane and beneficent exertions for bringing the same to a termination. We trust that the two nations will see the wisdom and policy of speedily renewing a negotiation so favourable to the interests of humanity, and of concluding the war on terms just in themselves, and honourable to the parties interested, the only true foundation on which a lasting pacification can be expected. But if unfortunately, such hopes should not be realized, and should the farther prosecution of the war become necessary, your majesty may be assured of the firm and unalterable support of your faithful Commons in making every exertion that circumstances may render necessary, for procuring a safe and honourable peace on terms consistent with the dignity of your majesty's crown and kingdoms, and the prosperity and essential interests of your people."

Mr. *Bryan Edwards* seconded the amendment.

Earl *Temple*,* in a maiden speech, addressed the House to the following effect:—Mr. Speaker; Every consideration making it not only impossible, but improper, for me to give a silent vote this evening on the subject before us, I shall beg the patience of the House for a very few moments. I should have hoped that I should have been able this evening to have seen many gentlemen, who used to attend on the other side of this House, in their places. I should have hoped, that on an occasion like the present, on a subject like the one now before the House, involving the dearest interests of their country, that those gentlemen would for a moment have forgot that disgust which *they say* drove them from this House: I should have hoped that for once they would have done their duty, in spite of the laughter of which we are given to understand they stand so much in dread. Their country, Sir, has little to thank them for; their constituents have still less to thank them for, when they see their interests deserted

* The present Marquis of Buckingham. [A. D. 1818,]

by their representatives, and themselves insulted by a mockery of a representation. With respect to the address now laid before this House for our consideration, I do not hesitate to say, that I give it my most hearty assent; and I give that assent because the words of the address are so cautious and so guarded, as to allow me to give that assent consistently with those principles which I shall have the honour of laying before the House this evening: I give it my assent because I really think our warmest thanks are due to his majesty and his ministers, for the manly manner in which the negotiation has been concluded; and every sentiment of attachment to his majesty's royal person, and to our constitution, and every sentiment that can pledge this House to support both the one and the other, shall ever meet with my warmest and most heartfelt concurrence. But, Sir, I do not scruple to say, that from the first moment of the first advances to negotiation, I looked with terror to the event of it; and I really saw much more to dread in the probable event of peace at this moment, than in the continuance of the war. This, Sir, may be a bold opinion, but it is one which I trust is founded in truth. Every thinking mind that has watched the crooked policy which for some months has guided the councils of France, could easily have foretold the probable event of any attempt on our part to negotiate. I do not mean to say by this, that the difficulty arose out of the actual existing government in France; every government capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity, is capable of being negotiated with by us, and I profess myself as only the friend to French monarchy, as I think the blessings of peace could easier be obtained to this country under that government, just as I should be the friend of any government, even of the tyranny of the grand seignior, if I thought the grand seignior would sooner give peace to this country. To every man who has watched the progress of the French revolution, it must have been evident that as long as the moderate party found themselves superior to Jacobinism and terrorism, so long our hopes of peace were more sanguine; but the moment that Jacobinism and terrorism made head against the moderate party, all hopes of accommodation vanished. The same policy, whatever it was, that induced the then rulers of France to make war with this country, still holds its ground, and

ever will hold its ground as long as terror is the order of the day. Whoever for the moment holds the uncertain and blood-stained reins of power; whether a Brissot, a Marat, or a Robespierre, whether one tyrant or five; to every impartial man who has watched the progress of the events at Lisle, and has connected them with what passed in Paris, it must plainly appear, that even from the very first beginning of the negotiation, the majority of the Executive Directory never for a moment intended that peace should be made with this country. That determination they did not choose to avow whilst they felt themselves awed by the rising party, at the head of which Carnot and Barthelemy placed themselves; but the moment their stars set, our prospects vanished. They proposed terms to us, which had once been offered and refused; terms which they knew Lord Malmesbury had not powers to close with; terms which they knew no Englishman would submit to, and which only could be calculated to drive us to the wall, and make it appear to the eyes of all Europe, that we had put an end to a negotiation which France encouraged, and which France rendered it impossible for us to continue. If there had been a heart so lost to every sense of national spirit and national honour, as to have agreed to those concessions; if there had been a hand so dastardly, and I will also say, so hardy, as to have signed those concessions, we should then, Sir, have had the comfort of being told that those concessions, miserable and despicable as they are, are not the consequences, but the price of negotiation, and only went to to make way for other demands doubly degrading perhaps, and doubly disgraceful. The first founders of the French republic all acknowledged that one principle which has served as the basis of all their actions, that the suns of England and France can never shine together in the same hemisphere. However the constitution of that country has been changed, however the ambition of individuals and the axe of the guillotine have varied its systems and its leaders, the same spirit still holds its ground; the same antipathy to England is still the watch-word of every party; and the cry of the armies, of the Directory, of the councils, and of the people, is still "*Delenda est Carthago*." Look, Sir, at the latest proceedings of the French Directory. We see a deputation sent by Buonaparte, notify-

ing the conclusion of peace between France and the Emperor. It was to be hoped that, pacific as the object of that deputation was, its language would be equally pacific: not so; the language of that deputation was of violent invective against the government of this country, and of insult against the people of England. And this language, Sir, which directly stated the impossibility of England and France existing together, those sentiments which express the actual necessity of eternal warfare between the two countries were received with the most rapturous applause, and rewarded with the most enthusiastic fraternal embrace of the rulers of that people who call themselves friends to the human race? There cannot Sir, be a stronger proof of the assertion I have brought forward respecting the antipathy of France towards this country, than the late gasconading arrêté of the French Directory, appointing on the coasts of France, an army of near half a million of men, and dignifying it by a name which I trust it never will deserve, that of "the army of England." It is hardly possible to talk seriously on this subject. They appoint an army for invasion, and then lay up their fleet as a preparatory step for invasion. How, therefore, that army is to put its objects into execution, remains a mystery; whether cork jackets or balloons are to be used as substitutes for their navy, remains as yet to be seen. Not, however, Sir, to treat that subject with greater levity than it deserves, the object of these preparations is the same, and I think my right hon. kinsman, the chancellor of the exchequer, ought to feel himself under the greatest obligations to the French Directory, for the decisive step they have taken to prove, if it were necessary, to all France, Europe and the world, that their antipathy is solely directed against England, and that that antipathy is irreconcilable. The moment that country can boast of a government it can support from one week to the other; the moment that country can boast of a constitution it can preserve from violation from one day to the next; the moment it can boast of rulers who can save themselves from the scaffold from one hour to the other; from that moment I shall say that a door is open to negotiation. But when I am told that we have been negotiating with a country which can sport with the most solemn treaties which can overturn the most es-

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tablished rights of nations, and which, with all this, cannot guarantee its own existence even while that negotiation was pending, I indeed blush for England. To show, Sir, that I am not bringing an unsupported charge against France, and that I am not exaggerating what indeed does not require any exaggeration, a very cursory retrospect to what has passed will very clearly prove. France, Sir, began her career by engaging that she would not interfere with the government of any country. In the words of a report made to the National Convention in the year 1794, on the diplomatic principles which the French republic ought to adopt: "Her project of aggrandizement and of conquest are, to respect the territory, the rights and blood of a people. Her diplomatic system is a policy which shall not sport with oaths, which shall not reduce the violation of treaties to a habit, which respects the limits that nature has placed, the laws which a people have established, and the transactions which public faith has rendered sacred."—Such, Sir, was the language of the French republican of 1794: how does the republican of 1797 keep those engagements? He keeps them by violating the territory of every country in which his arms or his arts could give him an influence: he keeps them by making over, as a free gift to a foreign power, by virtue of a solemn treaty, "the territory, the rights, the blood of a people," not the property of France to give: he keeps them by refusing to ratify the most solemn treaties, which have hitherto been considered as the basis of the balance of European power; and he gives as a reason for that refusal, that those treaties were inconsistent with the present government of France, avowing by that means (what certainly did not require such avowal, for the actions of France speak for themselves) that the present government of France exists directly in the teeth of every constituted power in Europe;—he keeps them by opening his arms to the dissatisfied of every country, and to the dissatisfied of this, who by assassinating their sovereign, by annihilating their parliament, and by overturning their constitution, would render themselves worthy of French fraternity. Thus France keeps her engagements. She maintains her power by sitting quietly by, whilst her representatives are seized by the strong hand of power in the seat of government, in the midst of their official duties, and unheard, untried, sent into

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banishment. She sits by whilst the rights of election are snatched from her people. She sits by whilst the liberty of the press is at once destroyed. We read in the last proceedings of the Council of Five Hundred, a petition from a painter who is imprisoned by the police for abusing the war minister. I would ask, if I saw him to-night in his place, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Tierney), who amused this House very much the other night with some very trite observations and well-conceived witticisms on the war minister here, if the editors of those newspapers who the next day retailed to the world those witticisms and those observations had been taken up for it, what his opinion would have been of that transaction, and whether he would have conceived it to have been an act of vigour beyond the law or not? Whatever might have been his opinion, such was the fact, and such the boasted effects of French justice, of French liberty, and of French equality. And yet with this country we have negotiated; and again I congratulate the country most sincerely on the event of this negotiation. If that peace had been concluded, whatever might have been its object, whatever might have been its terms, it could not have remained valid for an instant; and I defy my right hon. kinsman the chancellor of the exchequer to deny, that whatever peace might have been made on the 3rd of September would not have been broken on the 4th. How much better, Sir, is our situation now. We know our danger, we know our resources are equal to it, and what is better, we know the spirit of the country to be such as to give those resources their proper force and their full power of action. Not to take up the time of the House any longer—The broad basis and the principles on which I go are, that whilst the government of France (of whatever nature that government may be), remains in this unsettled state, I object to the idea of negotiating in toto; but I applaud and approve of those measures which have been taken when we were in the scrape, to extricate us from it. I have every apology to make to the House, for taking up so much of its time; but called upon as I am by a large county, to support its interests, and from my connexions and situation, having every thing to risk in the contest in which we are engaged, I should have thought myself wrong if I had not stated my opinions. I promised my constituents when they elected me,

that my vote should be that of an independent and an unbiassed mind. Whatever may be my connexions of blood, whatever may be my connexions of partiality, I stand forward, neither blindly bowing to the dictates of any minister, nor do I insult the House by telling them that I have “a general retainer for the session,” to object to every thing which ministers may bring forward.* I stand forward a plain independent country gentleman, professing those principles which I think best become at this moment a member of this House: and to the indulgence of this House I commit myself. With respect to the amendment, I decidedly oppose it. The hon. baronet who brings it forward, asserts every thing, and proves nothing; and I think that if it passes this House, the country will be sunk to a lower pitch of degradation than ever.

Mr. Pitt said:—Sir; having come to this House with the firm persuasion, that there never existed an occasion, when the unanimous concurrence of the House might be more justly expected than on a proposal to agree in the sentiments contained in the address which has been read, I must confess myself considerably disappointed, in some degree, even by the speech of my noble relation (much as I rejoice in the testimony which he has given of his talents and abilities), and still more by the speech of the hon. baronet, and by the amendment which he has moved. I cannot agree with the noble lord in the extent to which he has stated his sentiments, that we ought to rejoice that peace was not made; much less, Sir, can I feel desirous to accept on the part of myself or my colleagues, either from my noble kinsman, or any other person, the approbation which he was pleased to express, of the manner in which we have concluded the negotiation. *We* have not concluded the negotiation—the negotiation has been concluded by others; we have not been suffered to continue it; our claim to merit, if we have any, our claim to the approbation of our country is, that we persisted in every attempt to conduct that negotiation to a pacific termination, as long as our enemies left us, not the prospect but the chance or possibility of doing so, consistent with our honour, our dignity, and our safety. We lament and deplore the disappointment of

* See p. 963.

the sincere wishes which we felt, and of the earnest endeavours which we employed; yet we are far from suffering those sentiments to induce us to adopt the unmanly line of conduct that has been recommended by the hon. baronet; this is not the moment to dwell only on our disappointment, to suppress our indignation, or to let our courage, our constancy, and our determination, be buried in the expressions of unmanly fear, or unavailing regret. Between these two extremes, it is, that I trust our conduct is directed; and in calling upon the House to join in sentiments between those extremes, I do trust, that if we cannot have the unanimous opinion, we shall have the general and ready concurrence both of the House and of the country.

Sir, before I trouble the House, which I am not desirous of doing at length, with a few points which I wish to recapitulate, let me first call to your minds the general nature of the amendment which the hon. baronet has, under these circumstances, thought fit to propose, and the general nature of the observations by which he introduced it. He began with deploring the calamities of war on the general topic, that all war is calamitous. Do I object to this sentiment? No: but is it our business at a moment when we feel that the continuance of that war is owing to the animosity, the implacable animosity of our enemy, to the inveterate and insatiable ambition of the present frantic government of France, not of the people of France, as the hon. baronet unjustly stated it—is it our business at that moment to content ourselves with merely lamenting in common-place terms the calamities of war, and forgetting that it is part of the duty which as representatives of the people, we owe to our government and our country, to state that the continuance of those evils upon ourselves, and upon France too, is the fruit only of the conduct of the enemy; that it is to be imputed to them, and not to us?

Sir, the papers which were ordered to be laid on the table have been in every gentleman's hand, and on the materials which they furnish we must be prepared to decide. Can there be a doubt, that all the evils of war, whatever may be their consequences, are to be imputed solely to his majesty's enemies? Is there any man here prepared to deny, that the delay in every stage of the negotiation, and its final rupture, are proved to be

owing to the evasive conduct, the unwarrantable pretensions, the inordinate ambition, and the implacable animosity of the enemy? I will shortly state what are the points, though it is hardly necessary that I should state them, for they speak loudly for themselves, on which I would rest that proposition; but if there is any man who doubts it, is it the hon. baronet? Is it he who makes this amendment, leaving out every thing that is honourable to the character of his own country, and seeming to court some new complaisance on the part of the French Directory?—the hon. baronet, who, as soon as he has stated the nature of his amendment, makes the first part of his speech a charge against his majesty's ministers, for even having commenced the negotiation in the manner, and under the circumstances in which they did commence it—who makes his next charge, their having persevered in it, when violations of form and practice were insisted upon in the earliest stage of it. Does he discover that the French government, whom we have accused with insincerity have been sincere from the beginning to the end of the negotiation? Or, after having accused his majesty's ministers for commencing and persevering in it, is the hon. baronet so afraid of being misconstrued into an idea of animosity against the people of France, that he must disguise the truth, must do injustice to the character and cause of his own country, and leave unexplained the cause of the continuance of this great contest? Let us be prepared to probe that question to the bottom, to form our opinion upon it, and to render our conduct conformable to that opinion. This, I conceive to be a manly conduct, and, especially at such a moment to be the indispensable duty of the House. But let not the hon. baronet imagine there is any ground for his apprehension, that by adopting the language of the address, which ascribes the continuance of the war to the ambition of the enemy, we shall declare a system of endless animosity between the nations of Great Britain and France. I say directly the contrary. He who scruples to declare, that in the present moment the government of France are acting as much in contradiction to the known wishes of the French nation as to the just pretensions and anxious wishes of the people of Great Britain—he who scruples to declare them the authors of this calamity, deprives us of the consolatory hope which we are in-

clined to cherish, of some future change of circumstances more favourable to our wishes.

It is a melancholy spectacle, indeed, to see in any country, and on the ruin of any pretence of liberty, however nominal, shallow, or delusive, a system of tyranny erected, the most galling, the most horrible, the most undisguised in all its parts and attributes that has stained the page of history, or disgraced the annals of the world; but it would be much more unfortunate, if when we see that the same cause carries desolation through France, which extends disquiet and fermentation through Europe, it would be worse, indeed, if we attributed to the nation of France that which is to be attributed only to the unwarranted and usurped authority which involves them in misery, and would, if unresisted, involve Europe with them in one common ruin and destruction. Do we state this to be animosity on the part of the people of France? Do we state this in order to raise up an implacable spirit of animosity against that country? Where is one word to that effect in the declaration to which the hon. baronet has alluded? He complains much of this declaration, because it tends to perpetuate animosity between two nations which one day or other must be at peace—God grant that day may be soon! But what does that declaration express upon the subject? Does it express, that because the present existing government of France has acted as it has acted, we forego the wish or renounce the hope that some new situation may lead to happier consequences? On the contrary, his majesty's language is distinctly this: "While this determination continues to prevail on the part of his enemies, his majesty's earnest wishes and endeavours to restore peace to his subjects must be fruitless; but his sentiments remain unaltered; he looks with anxious expectation to the moment when the government of France may show a temper and spirit, in any degree corresponding with his own." I wish to know whether words can be found in the English language which more expressly state the contrary sentiment to that which the hon. baronet imputes; they not only disclaim animosity against the people of France in consequence of the conduct of its rulers, but do not go the length of declaring, that after all this provocation, even with the present rulers, all treaty is impracticable. Whether it is probable, that acting

on the principles upon which they have acquired their power, and while that power continues, they will listen to any system of moderation or justice at home or abroad, it is not now necessary to discuss; but, for one, I desire to express my cordial concurrence in the sentiment, so pointedly expressed in that passage of the declaration, in which his majesty, notwithstanding all the provocation he has received, and even after the recent successes, which, by the blessing of Providence, have attended his arms, declares his readiness to adhere to the same moderate terms and principles which he proposed at the time of our greatest difficulties, and to conclude peace on that ground, if it can now be obtained, even with this very government.

I am sensible, that while I am endeavouring to vindicate his majesty's servants against the charges of the hon. baronet, which are sufficiently, however, refuted by the early part of his own speech, I am incurring, in some degree, the censure of the noble lord to whom I before alluded. According to his principles and opinions, and of some few others in this country, it is matter of charge against us that we even harbour in our minds at this moment, a wish to conclude peace upon the terms which we think admissible with the present rulers of France. I am not one of those, who can or will join in that sentiment. I have no difficulty in repeating what I stated before, that in their present spirit, after what they have said, and still more, after what they have done, I can entertain little hope of so desirable an event. I have no hesitation in avowing, for it would be idleness and hypocrisy to conceal it, that for the sake of mankind in general, and to gratify those sentiments which can never be eradicated from the human heart, I should see with pleasure and satisfaction the termination of a government whose conduct, and whose origin is such as we have seen that of the government of France: but that is not the object—that ought not to be the principle of the war, whatever wish I may entertain in my own heart; and whatever opinion I may think it fair or manly to avow, I have no difficulty in stating, that violent and odious as is the character of that government, I verily believe, in the present state of Europe, that if we are not wanting to ourselves, if, by the blessing of Providence, our perseverance, and our resources, should enable us to make peace with France upon terms

in which we taint not our character, in which we do not abandon the sources of our wealth, the means of our strength, the defence of what we already possess; if we maintain our equal pretensions, and assert that rank which we are entitled to hold among nations—the moment peace can be obtained on such terms, be the form of government in France what it may, peace is desirable, peace is then anxiously to be sought. But unless it is attained on such terms, there is no extremity of war, there is no extremity of honourable contest, that is not preferable to the name and pretence of peace, which must be in reality a disgraceful capitulation, a base, an abject surrender of every thing that constitutes the pride, the safety and happiness of England.

These, Sir, are the sentiments of my mind on this leading point, and with these sentiments I shape my conduct between the contending opinions of the noble lord and of the honourable baronet. But there is one observation of the hon. baronet on which I must now more particularly remark. He has discovered that we state the Directory of France to have been all along insincere, and yet take merit for having commenced a negotiation, which we ought never to have commenced without being persuaded of their sincerity. This supposed contradiction requires but a few words to explain it. I believe that those who constitute the present government of France never were sincere for a moment in the negotiation; from all the information I have obtained, and from every conjecture I could form, I, for one, never was so duped as to believe them sincere: but I did believe, and I thought I knew, that there was a general prevailing wish for peace, and a predominant sense of its necessity growing and confirming itself in France, and founded on the most obvious and most pressing motives. I did see a spirit of reviving moderation, gradually gaining ground, and opening a way to the happiest alterations in the general system of that country: I did believe that the violence of that portion of the executive government, which, by the late strange revolution of France, unhappily for France itself and for the world, has gained the ascendancy, would have been restrained within some bounds; that ambition must give way to reason; that even phrenzy itself must be controlled and governed by necessity. These were the hopes and expectations I entertained. I did, not-

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withstanding, feel, that even from the outset, and in every step of that negotiation, those who happily had not yet the full power to cut it short in the beginning, who dared not trust the public eye with the whole of their designs, who could not avow all their principles, unfortunately, nevertheless, did retain from the beginning power enough to control those who had a better disposition; to mix in every part of the negotiation, which they could not then abruptly break off, whatever could impede, embarrass and perplex, in order to throw upon us, if possible, the odium of its failure.

Sir, the system of France is explained by the very objections that are made against our conduct. The violent party could not, as I have stated, at once break off the treaty on their part, but they wished to drive England to the rupture; they had not strength enough to reject all negotiation, but they had strength enough to mix in every step those degradations and insults, those inconsistent and unwarranted pretensions in points even of subordinate importance, which reduced ministers to that opinion which I have described; but which they decided in a way that has exposed them to the censure of the hon. baronet. They chose rather to incur the blame of sacrificing punctilios (at some time essential) rather than afford the enemy an opportunity of evading this plain question—Is there any ground, and, if any, what, upon which you are ready to conclude peace? To that point it was our duty to drive them; we have driven them to that point; they would tell us no terms, however exorbitant and unwarrantable, upon which they would be ready to make peace. What would have been the honourable baronet's expedient to avoid this embarrassment? It would have been, as he has this day informed us, an address which he had thought of moving in the last session, and which, indeed, I should have been less surprised had he moved, than if the House had concurred in it; he would have moved that no project should be given in till the enemy were prepared to present a contre-projet. If it was a great misfortune that that address was not moved, I am afraid some of the guilt belongs to me, because the hon. baronet did suggest such an idea, and I did with great sincerity and frankness tell him, that if he was really a friend to peace, there was no motion he could make so little calculated to promote that

object; and I did prevail upon the hon. baronet to give up the intention. If I am right in the supposition I have stated; if I am right in thinking that our great object was to press France to this point, and to put the question—if you have any terms to offer, what are they?—was there any one way by which we could make it so difficult for them to retain any pretence of a desire for peace, as to speak out ourselves, and call upon them either for agreement, or for modification, or for some other plan in their turn? By not adopting the hon. baronet's plan, we have put the question beyond dispute, whether peace was attainable at last, and whether our advances would or would not be met on the part of France; and I shall, to the latest hour of my life, rejoice that we were fortunate enough to place this question in the light which defies the powers of misrepresentation, in which a man can attempt to perplex it, and in which it presents itself this day for the decision of the House and of the nation, and calls upon every individual who has at stake the public happiness and his own, to determine for himself, whether this is or is not a crisis which requires his best exertions in the defence of his country.

To show which, I shall now proceed, notwithstanding the reproach which has been thrown on our line of conduct, to show the system even of obstinate forbearance, with which we endeavoured to overcome preliminary difficulties, the determined resolution on our part to overlook all minor obstacles and to come to the real essence of discussion upon the terms of peace. To show this, it is not necessary to do more than to call to the recollection of the House the leading parts of the declaration of his majesty. I mean to leave that part of the subject also without the possibility of doubt, or difference of opinion. It is certainly true, that, even previous to any of the circumstances that related to the preliminary forms of the negotiation, the prior conduct of France had offered to any government that was not sincerely and most anxiously bent upon peace, sufficient ground for the continuance of hostilities; it is true that, in the former negotiation at Paris, lord Malmesbury was finally sent away, not upon a question of terms of peace, not upon a question of the cession of European or colonial possessions, but upon the haughty demand of a previous preliminary, which should give up

every thing on the part of the allies, and which should leave them afterwards every thing to ask, or rather to require. It is true it closed in nearly the same insulting manner as the second mission; it is true, too, that, subsequent to that period, in the preliminaries concluded between the emperor and France, it was agreed to invite the allies of each party to a congress, which, however, was never carried into execution. It was under these circumstances that his majesty, in the earnest desire of availing himself of that spirit of moderation which had begun to show itself in France, determined to renew those proposals which had been before slighted and rejected; but when this step was taken, what was the conduct of those who have gained the ascendancy in France? On the first application to know on what ground they were disposed to negotiate, wantonly, as will be shown by the sequel, and for no purpose but to prevent even the opening of the conferences, they insisted upon a mode of negotiation very contrary to general usage and convenience, contrary to the mode in which they had terminated war with any of the belligerent powers, and directly contrary to any mode which they themselves afterwards persisted in following in this very negotiation with us. They began by saying, they would receive no proposals for preliminaries, but that conferences should be held for the purpose of concluding at once a definitive treaty.

His majesty's answer was, that it was his desire to adopt that mode only which was most likely to accelerate the object in view, and the powers of his plenipotentiary would apply to either object, either preliminary or definitive. They appeared content with his answer: but what was the next step? In the simple form of granting a passport for the minister, at the moment they were saying they preferred a definitive peace, because it was the most expeditious; in that very passport, which in all former times has only described the character of the minister, without entering into any thing relating to the terms or mode of negotiating, they insert a condition relative to his powers, and that inconsistent with what his majesty had explained to be the nature of the powers he had intended to give, and with which they had apparently been satisfied; they made it a passport not for a minister coming to conclude peace generally, but applicable only to a definitive and separate peace.

This proceeding was in itself liable to the most obvious objection; but it is more important, as an instance to show how, in the simplest part of the transaction, the untractable spirit of France discovered itself; it throws light upon the subsequent part of the transaction, and shows the inconsistencies and contradictions of their successive pretensions. As to the condition then made in the passport for the first time, that the negotiation should be for a separate peace, his majesty declared that he had no choice between a definitive and a preliminary treaty, but as to a separate peace, his honour and good faith, with regard to his ally the queen of Portugal, would not permit it: he therefore stated his unalterable determination to agree to no treaty in which Portugal should not be included, expressing, at the same time, his readiness that France should treat on the part of Holland and Spain.—On this occasion, the good faith of this country prevailed; the system of violence and despotism was not then ripe, and therefore his majesty's demand to treat for Portugal was acquiesced in by the Directory. They, at the same time, undertook to treat on their part for their allies, Holland and Spain, as well as for themselves, though, in the subsequent course of the negotiation, they pretended to be without sufficient power to treat for either.

I must here entreat the attention of the House to the next circumstance which occurred. When the firmness of his majesty, his anxious and sincere desire to terminate the horrors of war, and his uniform moderation, overcame the violence, and defeated the designs of the members of the executive government of France, they had recourse to another expedient—the most absurd as well as the most unjustifiable: they adverted to the rupture of the former negotiation, as if that rupture was to be imputed to his majesty; and this insinuation was accompanied with a personal reflection upon the minister who was sent by his majesty to treat on the part of this country. His majesty, looking anxiously as he did to the conclusion of peace, disdained to reply otherwise, than by observing, that this was not a fit topic to be agitated at the moment of renewing a negotiation, and that the circumstances of the transaction were well enough known to Europe and to the world. And the result of this negotiation has confirmed what the former had

sufficiently proved, that his majesty could not have selected, in the ample field of talents which his dominions furnish, any person better qualified to do justice to his sincere and benevolent desire, to promote the restoration of peace, and his firm and unalterable determination to maintain the dignity and honour of his kingdoms.—In spite of these obstacles, and others more minute, the British plenipotentiary at length arrived at Lisle; and full powers were transmitted to the respective governments, and were found unexceptionable, though the supposed defect of these full powers is, three months after, alleged as a cause for the rupture of the negotiation; and what is more remarkable, it did so happen that the French full powers were, on the face of them, much more limited than ours, for they only enabled the commissioners of the Directory to act according to the instructions they were to receive from time to time. On this point it is not necessary now to dwell, but I desire the House to treasure it in their memory, when we come to the question of pretence for the rupture of the negotiation.

Then, Sir, I come to the point in which we have incurred the censure of the hon. baronet, for delivering in on our part a projet. To his opinion, I do not subscribe, for the reasons that I stated before. But can there be a stronger proof of his majesty's sincerity, than his waving so many points important in themselves rather than suffer the negotiation to be broken off? What was our situation! We were to treat with a government, that had in the outset expressed, that they would treat only definitively; and from every part of their conduct which preceded the meeting of our plenipotentiary, and their commissioners, we might have expected that they would have been prepared to answer our projet almost in twenty-four hours after it was delivered. We stood with respect to France in this predicament—we had nothing to ask of them, the question only was, how much we were to give of that which the valour of his majesty's arms had acquired from them, and from their allies. In this situation, surely, we might have expected, that, before we offered the price of peace, they would at least have condescended to say what were the sacrifices which they expected us to make. But, Sir, in this situation, what species of projet was it that was presented by his majesty's minister? A projet the most distinct, the most particular, the most

conciliatory and moderate that ever constituted the first words spoken by any negotiator; and yet of this projet what have we heard in the language of the French government? What have we seen dispersed through all Europe by that press in France which knows no sentiments but what French policy dictates? What have we seen dispersed by that English press which knows no other use of English liberty, but servilely to retail and transcribe French opinions? We have been told, that it was a projet that refused to embrace the terms of negotiation. Gentlemen have read the papers—how does the fact stand? In the original projet we agreed to give up the conquests we had made from France and her allies, with certain exceptions. For those exceptions a blank was left, in order to ascertain whether France was desirous that the exceptions should be divided between her and her allies, or whether she continued to insist upon a complete compensation, and left England to look for compensation only to her allies. France, zealous as she pretends to be for her allies, had no difficulty in authorizing her ministers to declare, that she must retain every thing for herself. This blank was then filled up, and it was then distinctly stated, how little, out of what we had, we demanded to keep; in one sense, it remains a blank still, we did not attempt to preclude France from any other mode of filling it up; but while we stated the utmost extent of our own views, we left open to full explanation whatever points the government of France could desire. We called upon them, and repeatedly solicited them, to state something as to the nature of the terms which they proposed, if they objected to ours. It was thus left open to modification, alteration, or concession: but this is not the place, this is not the time, in which I am to discuss, whether those terms, in all given circumstances, or in the circumstances of that moment, were or were not the ultimate terms upon which peace ought to be accepted or rejected; if it were once brought to the point when an ultimatum could be judged of, I will not argue whether some great concession might not have been made with the certainty of peace, or whether the terms proposed constituted an offer of peace upon more favourable grounds for the enemy than his majesty's ministers could justify. I argue not the one question nor the other; it would be inconsistent with the public

interest and our duty, that we should here state or discuss it; all that I have to discuss, is, whether the terms, upon the face of them, appear honourable, open, frank, distinct, sincere, and a pledge of moderation; and I leave it to the good sense of the House, whether there can exist a difference of opinion upon this point.

Sir, what was it we offered to renounce to France? In one word, all that we had taken from them. What did this consist of?—the valuable, and almost, under all circumstances, the impregnable island of Martinique, various other West India possessions, St. Lucia, Tobago, the French part of St. Domingo, the settlements of Pondicherry and Chandernagore, all the French factories and means of trade in the East Indies, and the isles of St. Pierre and Miquelon; and for what were these renunciations to be made? For peace, and for peace only. And to whom. To a nation which had obtained from his majesty's dominions in Europe nothing in the course of the war, which had never met our fleets but to add to the catalogue of our victories, and to swell the melancholy lists of their own captures and defeats.—To a power which had never separately met the arms of this country by land, but to carry the glory and prowess of the British name to a higher pitch, and to a country whose commerce is unheard of, whose navy is annihilated, whose distress, confessed by themselves (however it may be attempted to be dissembled by their panegyrists in this or any other country), is acknowledged by the sighs and groans of the people of France, and proved by the expostulations and remonstrances occasioned by the violent measures of his executive government.—Such was the situation in which we stood—such the situation of the enemy when we offered to make these important concessions, as the price of peace. What was the situation of the allies of France? From Spain, who, from the moment she had deserted our cause, and enlisted on the part of the enemy, only added to the number of our conquests, and to her own indelible disgrace, we made claim of one island, the island of Trinidad, a claim not resting on the mere naked title of possession, to counterbalance the general European aggrandisement of France, but as the price of something that we had to give by making good the title to the Spanish part of St. Domingo, which Spain had ceded without right, and which cession

could not be made without our guarantee. To Holland, having in our hands the whole means of their commerce, the whole source of their wealth, we offered to return almost all that was valuable and lucrative to them, in the mere consideration of commerce; we desired in return to keep what to them, in a pecuniary view would be only a burthen, in a political view worse than useless, because they had not the means to keep it; what, had we granted it, would have been a sacrifice, not to them, but to France; what would in future have enabled her to carry on her plan of subjugation against the Eastern possessions of Holland itself, as well as against those of Great Britain. All that we asked, was, not indemnification for what we had suffered, but the means of preserving our own possessions, and the strength of our naval empire; we did this at a time when our enemy was feeling the pressure of war—and who looks at the question of peace without some regard to the relative situation of the country with which you are contending? Look then at their trade; look at their means; look at the posture of their affairs; look at what we hold, and at the means we have of defending ourselves, and our enemy of resisting us, and tell me, whether this offer was or was not a proof of sincerity, and a pledge of moderation. Sir, I should be ashamed of arguing it, I confess; I am apprehensive we may have gone too far in the first proposals we made, rather than show any backwardness in the negotiation; but it is unnecessary to argue this point.

Our proposal was received and allowed by the French plenipotentiaries, and transmitted for the consideration of the Directory; months had elapsed in sending couriers weekly and daily from Paris to Lisle, and from Lisle to Paris: they taught us to expect from time to time, a consideration of this subject, and an explicit answer to our projet. But the first attempt of the Directory to negotiate, after having received our projet, is worthy of remark; they required that we, whom they had summoned to a definitive treaty, should stop and discuss preliminary points, which were to be settled without knowing whether, when we had agreed to them all, we had advanced one inch: we were to discuss whether his majesty would renounce the title of king of France, a harmless feather, at most, in the crown of England; we were to discuss whether we would restore those ships taken at Toulon,

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the acquisition of valour, and which we were entitled upon every ground to hold; we were to discuss, whether we would renounce the mortgage which we might possess on the Netherlands, and which engaged much of the hon. baronet's attention: but it does so happen, that what the hon. baronet considered as so important, was of no importance at all. For a mortgage on the Netherlands, we have none, and consequently we have none to renounce; therefore, upon that condition, which they had no right to ask, and we had no means of granting, we told them the true state of the case, and that it was not worth talking about.

The next point which occurred, is of a nature which it is difficult to dwell upon without indignation; we were waiting the fulfilment of a promise which had been made repeatedly, of delivering to our ambassador a *contre-projet*, when they who had desired us to come for the purpose of concluding a definitive treaty, propose that we should subscribe as a *sine quâ non* preliminary, that we were ready in the first instance, to give up all that we had taken, and then to hear what they had farther to ask. Is it possible to suppose that such a thing could be listened to by any country that was not prepared to prostrate itself at the feet of France, and in that abject posture to adore its conqueror, to solicit new insults, to submit to demands still more degrading and ignominious, and to cancel at once the honour of the British name? His majesty had no hesitation in refusing to comply with such insolent and unwarrantable demands. Here again the House will see, that the spirit of the violent part of the French government, which had the insolence to advance this proposition, had not acquired power and strength in that state of the negotiation to adhere to it; his majesty's explanations and remonstrances for a time prevailed, and an interval ensued, in which we had a hope, that we were advancing to a pacification. His majesty's refusal of this demand was received by the French plenipotentiaries, with assurances of a pacific disposition, was transmitted to their government, and was seconded by a continued and repeated repetition of promises, that a *contre-projet* should be presented, pretending that they were under the necessity of sending to their allies an account of what passed; and that they were endeavouring to prevail on them to accede to proposals for

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putting an end to the calamities of war—to terminate the calamities of that war into which those allies were forced, in which they were retained by France alone, and in which they purchased nothing but sacrifices to France, and misery to themselves. We were told, indeed, in a conference that followed, that they had obtained an answer, but that not being sufficiently satisfactory, it was sent back to be considered. This continued, during the whole period, until that dreadful catastrophe of the 4th of September: even after that event, the same pretence was held out; they peremptorily promised the *contre-projet* in four days: the same pacific professions were renewed, and our minister was assured, that the change of circumstances in France should not be a bar to the pacification. Such was the uniform language of the plenipotentiaries in the name of the government—how it is proved by their actions I have already stated to the House. After this series of professions, what was the first step taken to go on with the negotiation in this spirit of conciliation? Sir, the first step was to renew, as his majesty's declaration has well stated in a shape still more offensive, the former inadmissible and rejected demand; the rejection of which had been acquiesced in by themselves two months before, and during all which time, we had been impatiently waiting for the performance of their promises. That demand was the same that I have already stated in substance, that lord Malmesbury should explain to them, not only his powers, but also his instructions; and they asked not for the formal extent of his power, which would give solidity to what he might conclude in the king's name, but they asked an irrevocable pledge, that he would consent to give up all that we had taken from them, and from their allies, without knowing how much more they had afterwards to ask. It is true they endeavoured to convince lord Malmesbury, that although an avowal of his instructions was demanded, it would never be required that he should act upon it, for there was a great difference between knowing the extent of the powers of a minister, and insisting upon their exercise. And here I would ask the hon. baronet, whether he thinks, if, in the first instance, we had given up all to the French plenipotentiaries, they would have given it all back again to us? Suppose I was ambassador from the French Directory, and the hon.

baronet, was ambassador from Great Britain, and I were to say to him, "Will you give up all you have gained? It would only be a handsome thing in you as an Englishman, and no ungenerous use should be made of it;" would the hon. baronet expect me, as a French ambassador, to say, "I am instructed, from the good nature of the Directory, to say you have acted handsomely, and I now return you what you have so generously given?" Should we not be called children and drivellers, if we could act in this manner? and indeed the French government could be nothing but children and drivellers, if they could suppose that we should have acceded to such a proposal.—But they are bound, it seems, by sacred treaties; they are bound by immutable laws; they are sworn when they make peace, to return every thing to their allies; and who shall require of France for the safety of Europe, to depart from its own pretensions to honour and independence?

If any person can really suppose that this country could have agreed to such a proposition, or that such a negotiation was likely to lead to a good end, all I can say is, that with such a man I will not argue. I leave others to imagine what was likely to have been the end of a negotiation, in which it was to have been settled as a preliminary, that you were to give up all that you have gained; and when, on the side of your enemy, not a word was said of what he had to propose afterwards. They demand of your ambassador to show to them not only his powers, but also his instructions, before they explain a word of theirs; and they tell you too, that you are never to expect to hear what their powers are, until you shall be ready to concede every thing which the Directory may think fit to require. This is certainly the substance of what they propose; and they tell you also, that they are to carry on the negotiation from the instructions which their plenipotentiaries are to receive from time to time from them. You are to have no power to instruct your ambassador; you are to show to the enemy at once all you have in view, and they will only tell you from time to time, as to them shall seem meet, what demands they shall make.

It was thus it was attempted, on the part of the French, to commence the negotiation. In July, this demand was made to lord Malmesbury. He stated, that his powers were ample. In answer

to this, they went no farther than to say, that if he had no such power as what they required, he should send to England to obtain it. To which he replied, that he had not, nor should he have it if he sent. In this they acquiesce, and attempt to amuse us for two months. At the end of that time, the plenipotentiaries say to lord Malmesbury, not what they said before, send to England for power to accede to proposals which you have already rejected; but go to England yourself for such powers, in order to obtain peace.

Such was the winding up of the negotiation; such was the way in which the prospect of peace has been disappointed by the conduct of France; and I must look upon the dismissal of lord Malmesbury as the last stage of the negotiation, because the undisguised insult by which it was pretended to be kept up for ten days after lord Malmesbury was sent away, was really below comment. You (France) send him to ask for those powers which you were told he had not, and in the refusal of which, you acquiesced: you have asked as a preliminary, that which is monstrous and exorbitant; that preliminary you were told would not be complied with, and yet the performance of that preliminary you made the *sine quâ non* condition of his return! Such was the last step by which the French government has shown that it had feeling enough left to think it necessary to search for some pretext to colour its proceedings; but they are such proceedings that no pretext or artifice can cover them, as will appear more particularly from the papers officially communicated to the House.

But here the subject does not rest: if we look to the whole complexion of this transaction, the duplicity, the arrogance, and violence which have appeared in the course of the negotiation, if we take from thence our opinion of its general result, we shall be justified in our conclusion, not that the people of France, not that the whole government of France, but that that part of the government which had too much influence, and has now the whole ascendancy, never was sincere; was determined to accept of no terms but such as would make it neither durable nor safe, such as could only be accepted by this country by a surrender of all its interests, and by a sacrifice of every pretension to the character of a great, a powerful, or an independent nation.

This, Sir, is inference no longer, you

have their own open avowal; you have it stated in the subsequent declaration of France itself, that it is not against your commerce, that it is not against your wealth, it is not against your possessions in the east, or colonies in the west, it is not against even the source of your maritime greatness, it is not against any of the appendages of your empire, but against the very essence of your liberty, against the foundation of your independence, against the citadel of your happiness, against your constitution itself, that their hostilities are directed. They have themselves announced and proclaimed the proposition, that what they mean to bring with their invading army is the genius of *their* liberty: I desire no other word to express the subversion of the British constitution,—and the substitution of the most malignant and fatal contrast,—and the annihilation of British liberty, and the obliteration of every thing that has rendered you a great, a flourishing, and a happy people.

This is what is at issue; for this are we to declare ourselves in a manner that deprecates the rage which our enemy will not dissemble, and which will be little moved by our entreaty. Under such circumstances are we ashamed or afraid to declare, in a firm and manly tone, our resolution to defend ourselves, or to speak the language of truth with the energy that belongs to Englishmen united in such a cause? Sir, I do not scruple, for one, to say, if I knew nothing by which I could state to myself a probability of the contest terminating in our favour, I would maintain, that the contest with its worst chances is preferable to an acquiescence in such demands.

If I could look at this as a dry question of prudence, if I could calculate it upon the mere grounds of interest, I would say, if we love that degree of national power which is necessary for the independence of the country, and its safety; if we regard domestic tranquillity, if we look at individual enjoyment, from the highest to the meanest among us, there is not a man, whose stake is so great in the country, that he ought to hesitate a moment in sacrificing any portion of it to oppose the violence of the enemy; nor is there, I trust, a man in this happy and free nation, whose stake is so small, that he would not be ready to sacrifice his life in the same cause. If we look at it with a view to safety, this would be our conduct; but if we look at it upon the principle of true honour, of the cha-

acter which we have to support, of the example which we have to set to the other nations of Europe, if we view rightly the lot in which Providence has placed us, and the contrast between ourselves and all the other countries in Europe, gratitude to that Providence should inspire us to make every effort in such a cause. There may be danger, but on the one side there is danger accompanied with honour, on the other side, there is danger with indelible shame and disgrace; upon such an alternative, Englishmen will not hesitate. I wish to disguise no part of my sentiments upon the grounds on which I put the issue of the contest. I ask, whether up to the principles I have stated, we are prepared to act? Having done so, my opinion is not altered, my hopes, however, are animated from the reflection that the means of our safety are in our own hands; for there never was a period when we had more to encourage us; in spite of heavy burthens, the radical strength of the nation never showed itself more conspicuous; its revenue never exhibited greater proofs of the wealth of the country; the same objects, which constitute the blessings we have to fight for, furnish us with the means of continuing them. But it is not upon that point I rest it: there is one great resource, which I trust will never abandon us, and which has shone forth in the English character, by which we have preserved our existence and fame, as a nation, which I trust we shall be determined never to abandon under any extremity, but shall join hand and heart in the solemn pledge that is proposed to us, and declare to his majesty, that we know great exertions are wanting, that we are prepared to make them, and at all events determined to stand or fall by the laws, liberties, and religion of our country.

Mr. *Pollen* said, he was surprised at the doubts that had been thrown out respecting the sincerity of ministers in their endeavours to procure peace. On a former occasion, perhaps, that sincerity was not so unequivocally announced; but on the late occasion he could not but think that the necessity of attaining peace, if it could be obtained on just and equitable terms, pressed as hard on the interests and the situation of ministers, as on any other description of his majesty's subjects; and therefore it was but candid to suppose that they were not indifferent or insincere in their efforts to accomplish an object

which they must have been conscious was universally desired. Every man must now feel the trying situation to which we are reduced. Of many of the past measures of ministers he had disapproved; but when we looked forward the prospect was too awful to permit us to attend to what had gone by. We were now called upon to look a situation in the face which required all our firmness to confront without dismay. There was no longer a question of consuming our strength in an unavailing struggle to maintain the balance of power, and the former system of European politics. A more urgent care pressed home on our feelings. We had now to defend every thing that was dear to us, our laws, our liberties, and our constitution. We had now to prevent the French from invading our kingdom, violating our females, and enslaving our children. Impressed with these apprehensions, he could not think of acquiescing in the sentiments of the hon. baronet. He differed from him, when he expressed a trust that France would be soon seriously disposed to enter into a fair and honourable negotiation. He was at a loss to discover the grounds upon which such a trust could rest. When they so obstinately rejected the terms that were offered them, he could not well see what was likely to satisfy them. The minister surely should not have stooped lower, and he trusted the right hon. gentleman would never be induced to make greater concessions.

Mr. *Martin* said, that if the French would have acceded to any reasonable terms, they should not be rejected: but when we saw them determined to dictate the conditions, we should not permit ourselves to be trampled on, but evince the spirit which became a great nation. The Address should, therefore, have his support.

Mr. *G. N. Edwards* disapproved of the amendment. The subject was a momentous one, and to have decided on it by a silent vote, would have been the more dignified manner. The Address should have his cordial support.

Mr. *John Lloyd* said, he should be wanting in the duty he owed to his constituents if he did not express their and his detestation of the perfidious conduct of the French Directory. Although the county of Flint suffered in a particular manner from the continuance of the war, yet there would not be found in any part

of the kingdom a set of men more ready to oppose the insatiable ambition of France, or more willing to make such temporary sacrifices as might be necessary to repel the attacks of an enemy that had carried desolation into every corner of the world. He should give his hearty vote for the Address.

Mr. *T. Tyrwhitt* intreated the hon. baronet to withdraw his amendment. If we were true to ourselves, there was nothing to alarm us; but if we were divided, we had every thing to fear. By unanimously assenting to the Address, we should give the lie direct to the malevolent assertions of the French, who insidiously represented us as a divided people.

The Earl of *Carysfort* cordially supported the Address. He had never seen any reasons to suppose, that the French government entered on the negotiation with a serious view to its having a favourable issue. Their power was founded in a system hostile to the re-establishment of tranquillity. To resist such a system was the policy of our ministers, and it deserved the countenance of the country. The French system was set up for the annoyance of Europe, and Europe could bear witness to the moderation and justice of our cause. Our resistance was pointed against the monstrous ambition and exorbitant pretensions of the enemy; and it was, moreover, in unison with the principles upon which the country had acted from the beginning; for we had uniformly declared, that whatever form their government might assume, we should not decline entering into negotiation, whenever such an attempt might be made, consistent with the honour and the security of the country. To that pledge we had strictly adhered; and the system of prudence and moderation which we had uniformly acted upon, should unite all men in a cordial and vigorous defence of our laws, our rights, and our constitution. Such an unanimous co-operation would have the doubly good effect of silencing the calumnies which abroad were circulated by the enemy, and of reviving our spirits at home, if, indeed, our spirits could be permitted to droop. There was nothing in our situation to excite despair. From whence could it arise? Was it from the empty threats held out against us by the French? We had tried their strength in many conflicts, and the trials were crowned with complete success. We had already conquered all their foreign

possessions, though any attempt to conquer France herself was not likely to succeed. An attempt, on their part, to make an impression on this country would prove equally ineffectual. He trusted the House would carry to the throne a full assurance of their utmost determination to exert the vigour, and call forth the resources of the country.

Dr. *Laurence* said, that agreeing with an hon. member in the opinion, that a silent vote was preferable to any declarations which might disturb the unanimity of that night, and hoping the hon. baronet would have withdrawn his amendment, he had intended not to have troubled the House. But the unanimity which alone he wished, was such as might answer the firm tone of the address proposed for the concurrence of the House, an unanimity of decision, vigour, and energy. He hoped at least, that they who had supported government in all their measures of war, or peace would have imitated the prudence of the chancellor of the exchequer, who had declined to argue whether he had offered to the enemy too little or too much as the price of peace; adding, at the same time, that the latter accusation was that which he most apprehended. Yet the noble lord who spoke last, thought it necessary to declare his approbation in the fullest manner, of every thing done by the king's ministers in the late negotiation; though he had stated, that from the very outset he did not expect them to succeed. He had thought this necessary, in consequence of what fell from another noble lord, who rising first to oppose the amendment, had expressed his regret that the negotiation had ever been commenced, and his joy that it had terminated in a defeat. Assenting most cordially to the principle of that joy and that regret, he felt himself called upon by what the last speaker had said in answer, to avow his assent in the face of his country: and however favourably the pacific disposition of government might have been originally viewed, and whatever hopes might have been entertained that a treaty would be actually concluded, he thought that no man who had seen the papers then before the House, and remembered the late events in France, could do otherwise than rejoice at our escape from that snare. For if the Directory, a little more pushed by the majority in their legislative councils, had accepted the terms we proposed, in what situation should we now have

been placed? When our enemies, without positively conceding any thing, appeared to temporise a little, the more violent and furious faction among them, which has now gained the ascendancy, was committed in a dubious struggle for power. Had our project of a definitive treaty been then signed, how should we now have stood? Has not that faction since stifled by open force, the first expression of any thing like the public voice of France? Do they not still profess the same principle which we so often pronounced to be hostile and fatal to all regular establishments? Do they not uniformly act upon them: and are they not as ready as ever to pour forth their hordes, to propagate them with the bayonet through every other nation? Had the negotiation succeeded, should we not now have been left, with many essential points unsettled, to the good faith of a power that never regarded any compact, any obligation, any public law of Europe; a power that in all our attempts to treat, had constantly recurred to the basis of its own laws and its own treaties; of laws which it changes at random, and of treaties which it violates as soon as they stand in the way of its interest or ambition? To this country in particular had not this power invariably declared and shown itself hostile to the utmost extent of hostility? Had not the Directory recently adopted and published to the world the sentiment, "that the French republic and the government of England could not exist together?" Not that in his estimation it was necessary to resort to such evidence; the enemy, from the first, uniformly betrayed his implacable animosity against us, in all his conduct. No peace with men of such opinions and such principles can be tolerably secure, till they shall know that we have the ability to resist and avenge every infringement of it. Nor is that ability to be displayed by a passive system of defence, or by sending against them a few ships, as one hon. gentleman had advised. They must feel the vigour of our arms; they must be made sensible, that the hands which wield the weapons, are impelled by hearts as brave as those which beat so high in the bosoms of our ancestors. When the season of security in peace shall have arrived, may be a question hereafter: conjecturing from the past, he thought it likely that he might differ again from ministers on that question; but at present it seemed to be the conviction of every man, that the period was not yet come. By the

common consent of all, we are under the necessity of pursuing the war with spirit and resolution. Under these circumstances, he would not go into a retrospect, which the address before the House did not make absolutely necessary. He only meant, in consequence of what had fallen from the noble lord who spoke last, to protest, in this manner, against being supposed to give any approbation to the proceedings at Lisle. He did indeed disapprove of them in almost every part. But should in the present situation of things, content himself with simply declaring, without arguing, that opinion. Upon one point he would touch, because in that one he could praise the firmness of the king's servants: he alluded to the "decided and unalterable resolution" expressed in one of lord Grenville's dipatches, not to admit of any proposals for treating with our enemies, about the navigation of neutral powers in time of war. And he was the more induced to advert to this subject, on account of a notion which had been thrown out in another place, by a noble person who once was at the head of his majesty's councils, and who might probably hope to be placed there again, and to make a second peace. It had been said, that we had better give up for ever the right of searching neutral vessels, and make that concession the ground of a new defensive league, than wait to have it extorted from us. He trusted we never should suffer any such concession to be extorted from us. The day in which any such treaty should be signed, would be fatal to the naval power of England. It is to our naval power that we owe the rank we hold as a nation. We have often, it is true, assumed another character with glory and success, and he trusted that we might assume it again with equal spirit and effect; but that character is only temporary. It is our maritime superiority that has hitherto enabled us permanently to maintain the balance of European power, and to incline it as we thought expedient, not to alarm and subjugate other nations, but for the preservation of that balance of power, and for the general benefit of all. Our enemies continually affect to put themselves in the place of ancient Rome, and us in that of its rival, Carthage; and an hon. baronet asked, the other night, if we were prepared to submit, like Carthage, to stipulate the reduction of our fleet. But such a disgraceful stipulation would be less fatal than insidiously hinted

to lord Malmesbury by the plenipotentiaries of the French republic. He did not mean to intimate that avarice was necessary to stimulate our seamen to the discharge of their duty. They had fought as bravely in the last century as in any period of our naval history, and yet they had not then that interest in prizes which they now have, by the bounty of the king and parliament. But if we once gave up universally the clear, undoubted right, which America herself in her present dispute with France has recognized, of stopping and searching the vessels of countries in peace and amity with us, our naval power would have little against which it could operate in any future war. An enemy unable to meet us in arms on the ocean, by surrendering his navigation, might secure his whole commerce in neutral ships, from our victorious force; and it was chiefly by distressing his commerce that a naval power can act so as to compel a peace. It was thus that by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, Louis 15th was contented to restore all his conquests, that he might be released from the pressure of our maritime power on the trade of his kingdom. He should not now discuss this question at large, but he thought it his duty to call the attention of the House, and the nation, as early as possible, to the danger which lurked under the gentle and specious language of the "freedom of the seas," which we had been recommended to acknowledge; as if the right, which we had invariably exercised, was an act of usurpation and injustice!--There was only one point more which he thought it proper to notice, in consequence of a phrase which had come from high authority, in the present debate. The chancellor of the exchequer had called his majesty's title of king of France, a harmless feather. In his own opinion, no ancient dignity, which for so many centuries had shed lustre on the English crown, ought to be considered as a mere light, unsubstantial ornament. It was bound up indissolubly with the honour of the nation. If we suffered that feather to be plucked, he feared that three other feathers, which were nearly connected with the crown, and were gallantly won in the same glorious wars by which we first asserted the claim of our monarchs to that harmless feather, would soon follow: the crown, and the throne itself would hardly be secure. A great nation can never safely submit to be disgraced. He wished the House

to carry their recollection back to the time of Edward 3rd, when that title was first used. Then it was that we had the first regular and full records of the proceedings in parliament. Whether it was from the peculiar favour of Providence, that we might have always before us an example to fix and steady our wavering courage, in moments of terror and trepidation; or whether it was from the veneration of our ancestors for this sacred relic, which they preserved with religious care, while they suffered less precious monuments to perish; but so the fact was, that the first traces of the deliberations and conferences of the two Houses, which appears on the rolls, are of that epoch, and exhibit a situation of the country, far less favourable than the present in every thing but the spirit of Englishmen. Making allowance for the relative value of money, much larger sums had then been spent in gaining the princes and states of the Netherlands to our side, than in the present war. Yet no reliance could be placed on the allies whom we had so gained. No effectual aid was derived from their co-operation, and in fact they soon after deserted us. Commerce we had none. Our revenue was not to be mentioned. Then, as now, we were obliged to resort to an issue of foreign coin, in order to supply our circulation; we had scarcely any specie of our own. We had acquired nothing from the enemy; we had lost our natural dominion of the sea; our coasts were insulted and plundered; Harwich had been set on fire; the Isle of Thanet, Folkstone, and Dover, had suffered more lightly: Hastings more severely; Southampton had been burnt to the ground; a great part of Plymouth, with all the great ships in that harbour, as well as other harbours in the west shared the same fate: and the Isle of Jersey had been conquered, as the records of the House confess, "to the great slander of the whole land." Within our own Island, the Scots, not as now united to us, but the fast allies of our enemies, were threatening the borders; while in many of our counties and cities existed a desperate knot of conspirators, bound together by oath, upon the first intelligence of those disasters which they wished to their country, to rise in a general insurrection, and rob and massacre their peaceable and well disposed neighbours.*

* See Rolls of Parliament, Vol. 2. p. 104.

What, then, was the conduct of parliament on that perilous and awful occasion? The Commons resolved that the government had sufficient power to protect the internal peace of the land. They proposed measures of external defence. They agreed in the necessity of a large supply, and they declared their own good will to grant what the exigencies of the state demanded; but to give greater effect to the measure, they advised that another parliament should be summoned, and in the mean time they promised on their loyalty and allegiance, that they would retire each to his own country, and there endeavour with all their influence to bring up the public mind to the exigencies of the public situation. And what was the event? What was the result of the vigour then exerted; of the spirit and union then displayed? What was the conclusion of a war of twenty years? A peace dictated by Edward, as he was marching back from the siege of Paris! Upon that glorious example we should fix our eyes, till we kindled as we gazed, into the zeal, ardour, and intrepidity which glowed in the hearts, and blazed out in the character and conduct of our ancestors. What will be the event of our present momentous contest for every thing valuable to man is only known to that Being who sees all things alike in their first causes, and their ultimate consequences. It is our part, with manly fortitude, to discharge our duty, in obedience to his moral law: and what that duty is, no man can hesitate a moment, when there is only the choice proposed in such eloquent and animated language, by the chancellor of the exchequer—danger, with glory; or certain though possibly with slower ruin, with indelible shame.

Mr. *Wilberforce* regretted that an amendment had been proposed, and wished that nothing had been said expressive of a want of unanimity in the House. For his own part, he would not have said a word upon the subject, if it had not been extorted from him by the learned gentleman who had just sat down, and who, while he strenuously recommended unanimity, made use of language very likely to produce a directly contrary effect. He was sorry the learned gentleman had not followed the example of the chancellor of the exchequer, who had said expressly, that whether ministers had gone too far in concessions or not, was a question on which he would not give an opi-

nion; to introduce that question, therefore, at a time when all should be harmony and unanimity, was, in his mind, exceedingly improper. It appeared, however, that, with the exception of the hon. baronet, all wished to assent to the address, although with different views. For himself, he did not, with the noble lord, regret that the negotiation had been commenced, nor rejoice that it was broken off; on the contrary, he sincerely lamented that it had had such an unprosperous issue. But even so, it was not without its use; for when it was seen that ministers did fairly and candidly, and with earnest desires for peace, come forward, and that, in order to obtain it, they had passed by so many insults, that had been offered in the course of the negotiation, no one could entertain a doubt of the unequivocal conduct of government on the one hand, and the unwarrantable intentions of France on the other; at least, he would say, that if there was any man who entertained such a doubt, he must be constructed very differently from him. So far from rejoicing at the obstinate temper of the enemy, he thought it to be just matter of regret; and he declared that he would continue to look out with sincere anxiety for the time, when, under the influence of returning reason, the French nation would come to negotiation with an earnest desire for that peace which was still more necessary to themselves than to England. In the mean time, he would tell the people that they must content themselves to bear considerable burthens, because all that was valuable to them in life was at stake. That as the conduct of the enemy in the late negotiation proclaimed, that not the obstinacy of his majesty's ministers, but the vain ambition of those with whom they had to treat, had procrastinated the wished-for event of peace, and that the overthrow of our government was the sole object of their designs, Englishmen should feel the necessity of coming forward in preservation of the constitution; and to secure those objects should join hand and heart together and proclaim to the world that if divided before, they could unite whenever union became necessary. Of this universal harmony of sentiment, he held the unanimity of that night to be a happy omen, and he hoped the hon. baronet would, in order to give that beginning its full force, withdraw his amendment.

Sir *J. Sinclair* said, he had not proposed

the amendment without due consideration, but he was not insensible to the effect of the display of eloquence which he had just heard. He sincerely wished for unanimity, and was willing to sacrifice not only his opinion, but any thing else that he possessed, to the welfare of the country; and would therefore cheerfully agree to withdraw his amendment, if the hon. gentleman who seconded it was present to give his consent.

The *Speaker* said, that a similar case had occurred about five or six years ago, when the mover of a question being desirous to withdraw it, could not do so, the seconder being absent. At that time the question was put that the amendment be withdrawn, and the only course the House could now take was to put the same question.

The *Speaker* therefore put the question that the amendment be withdrawn, which was agreed to. He then put the original question, which was agreed to *nem. con.*

The King's Answer to the Joint Address.] Nov. 15. To the Joint Address of both Houses, His Majesty returned this Answer:

"My Lords, and Gentlemen;

"Nothing could be more satisfactory to me than this unanimous declaration of the sentiments of my two Houses of Parliament. They are such as the conduct and declared intention of the enemy could not fail to produce. We are engaged in a cause which is common to us all, and contending for every interest which a free and independent nation can have to maintain. Under the blessing of Providence, I look with confidence to the issue of this great contest: but in every event my resolution is taken. It is such as I owe to God, to my country, and to myself; and it is confirmed by the sentiments which you have this day declared to me. I will not be wanting to my people, but will stand, or fall, with them in the defence of our religion, and in the maintenance of the independence, laws and liberties of these kingdoms."

Report of the Secret Committee on the State of the Bank.] Nov. 15. On the motion of Mr. Pitt, it was ordered, 1. "That a Committee of Secrecy be appointed to inquire whether it may be expedient further to continue the restriction contained in the said acts on payments in cash by the Bank. 2. That Mr. Hussey, [VOL. XXXIII.]

Mr. Grey, Mr. Plumer, Mr. Grenville, Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Blackburne, Mr. Bramston, Mr. Bragge, sir John Mitford, Mr. Wilberforce Bird, Mr. Fane. Mr. Hawkins Browne, sir John Scott, the lord mayor of London, together with lord V. Belgrave, be the committee of Secrecy now appointed."

Nov. 17. Mr. Bragge made the following Report from the said Committee:

REPORT.

"The COMMITTEE of SECRECY, appointed to inquire whether it may be expedient farther to continue the restriction, contained in two acts, made in the last session of Parliament, respecting Payments in Cash by the Bank; have inquired accordingly, and agreed upon the following Report; viz.

"Your Committee have, in the first place, examined the total amount of outstanding demands on the Bank of England, and of the funds for discharging the same; and find, from the examination of the governor and deputy governor of the Bank, and the documents produced by them, that the total amount of outstanding demands on the Bank was, on the 11th day of this instant November, 17,578,910*l.*; and that the total amount of the funds for discharging the same (without including the permanent debt due from government, of 11,686,800*l.*, which bears an interest of three per cent,) was, on the same day 21,418,460*l.*; leaving a balance of surplus in favour of the Bank (exclusive of the above-mentioned debt from government) of 3,839,550*l.*

"Your Committee next proceeded to examine the principal articles of which the above-mentioned sum of 21,418,460*l.*, being the credit side of the account, is made up, with a view of ascertaining how far the Bank might be enabled to resume its accustomed payments in cash, in case the restriction at present subsisting should be removed: and your Committee find that the advances to government have, on the one hand, been so much reduced since the 25th of February last, as to amount, on the said 11th day of this instant, November to no more than the sum of 4,258,140*l.* while, on the other hand, the cash and bullion in the Bank have increased to an amount more than five times the value of that at which they stood on the same 25th of February last, and much above that at which they have stood at any time since the beginning of September 1795.

"Your Committee farther find, that the course of exchange with Hamburgh, is, at present, unusually favourable to this country, and that, from the situation of our trade, there is good reason to imagine it will so continue, unless political circumstances should occur to affect it.

"Your Committee next proceeded to examine the governor and deputy governor of the Bank, as to their opinion of the inconvenience which may have arisen from the restriction imposed on the Bank from making payment in cash, and of the expediency of continuing such restriction; and your Committee find, that they are not aware of any such inconvenience, and that they are supported in that idea, by knowing that the bankers and traders of London, who had a right by the act of parliament to demand three-fourths of any deposit in cash which they had made in the Bank, of 500*l.* or upwards, have only claimed about one sixteenth; and your committee find, that the court of Directors of the Bank, did on the 26th of October, 1797, come to a resolution, a copy of which is subjoined to this Report.

"Your Committee having farther examined the governor and deputy governor, as to what may be meant by the political circumstances mentioned in that resolution, find, that they understand by them, the state of hostility in which the nation is still involved, and particularly such apprehensions as may be entertained of invasion, either in Ireland or this country, together with the possibility there may be of advances being to be made from this country to Ireland; and that from those circumstances so explained, and from the nature of the war, and the avowed purpose of the enemy to attack this country by means of its public credit, and to distress it in its financial operations, they are led to think that it will be expedient to continue the restriction now subsisting, with the reserve for partial issues of cash, at the discretion of the Bank, of the nature of that contained in the present acts and that it may be so continued, without injury to the credit of the Bank, with an advantage to the nation.

"Your Committee, therefore, having taken into consideration the general situation of the country, are of opinion, that notwithstanding the affairs of the Bank, both with respect to the general balance of its accounts, and its capacity of making payments in specie, are in such a state that it might with safety resume its accustomed functions, under a different state of public affairs; yet, that it will be expedient to continue the restriction now subsisting on such payments, for such time, and under such limitations, as to the wisdom of parliament may seem fit."

Copy of a RESOLUTION of a Court of Directors of the Bank.

"At a Court of Directors at the Bank on Thursday the 26th October 1797.

"Resolved;—That it is the opinion of this court, That the governor and company of the Bank of England are enabled to issue specie, in any manner that may be deemed necessary for the accommodation of the public; and the court have no hesitation to declare, that the

affairs of the Bank are in such a state, that it can with safety resume its accustomed functions, if the political circumstances of the country do not render it inexpedient; but the Directors deeming it foreign to their province to judge of these points, wish to submit to the wisdom of parliament, whether as it has been once judged proper to lay a restriction on the payments of the Bank in cash, it may, or may not be prudent to continue the same."

The Report was ordered to be printed.

Debate in the Commons on the Bank Restriction Continuance Bill.] Mr. Pitt then said, that after the clear and decided opinion the committee had pronounced, and after the distinct statement of the Bank Directors, it would be proper to proceed without delay to the object of the Report. He avowed that the measure he meant now to propose was not confined to the strict terms of the former bill; but would move on the principle that, as the country was peculiarly circumstanced, it would be advisable to continue the restriction as long as the present contest continued, or at least as long as that contest continued in the shape and with the aspect it now bore; reserving however to parliament the right to rescind the measure, and to limit, to qualify, or totally to annul the restriction, as future circumstances might induce them to think necessary. The House would readily conclude that it must always be his wish, as it must be their own, to restore the issue of money from the Bank to its former situation; but they would also consider that their continuing the restriction could not reasonably produce the least alarm or apprehension, since they had now indisputable evidence before them that, so far from the gloomy predictions of those gentlemen who said that neither the Bank nor the national credit could survive the measure being verified, both had rapidly risen to the high condition of prosperity which had just been stated; and that not one of those inconveniences which had been so confidently predicted to result from the restriction, had even yet arisen to justify the apprehensions of those who at first so violently opposed that measure. He therefore would move for leave to continue the restriction; but before he did so he must premise that some of the provisions would require amendment. The House would see how low the advances to government had been reduced; but they would hardly feel that the customary advances by the Bank upon the land and

malt duties ought to be prohibited; yet as the law now stood they would; it therefore would be necessary to open the bill in that respect. He then moved, "That leave be given to bring in a Bill, to continue, for a further time, the Restriction contained in the said acts on Payments in Cash by the Bank, and also to continue and amend the other Provisions in the same."

The motion was agreed to *nem. con.*

Nov. 21. The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

Nov. 22. On the order of the day for going into a Committee on the Bill,

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, that it had been stated in the report of the committee that the Bank was in a flourishing condition. To attempt to controvert that statement might appear invidious; but yet truth demanded of him to say, that it was not made good by the detail of the Report; for if the surplus in November exceeded that in February by only 12,660*l.* that could not be looked upon as any great indication of increasing prosperity. If it was a fact that they were in the prosperous state asserted, the Bank had been guilty of great misconduct in not making a proper use of it; for in July power was given them by parliament to make partial payments, and yet, while they were, by their own confession, in a flourishing state, they neglected to avail themselves of it by paying more than before, though they could not plead the restriction in their defence. There was another part of the measure to which he had an insuperable objection—the continuation of it to the end of the war. He had said on a former occasion that this would be the case; and now the minister was making good his prediction, alleging as a reason for so doing, that the nature of the contest in which we were engaged demanded it, though this was no part of the grounds for the former restriction, and though in comparing the war now with its nature at that time, it did not appear there was any material difference.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the question for consideration was not the want of ultimate security of the Bank, but the want of a due proportion between the cash in hand and the outstanding demands. The argument, then, was entirely on the deficiency of cash, and not on the nature and state of the general funds. In the very next sentence of the report to that which the hon.

gentleman had so industriously selected, appeared a statement, that there was now in the Bank five times more bullion than there was last year. By some sinister accident, however, this statement had escaped the research of the hon. gentleman. As to continuing the restriction for the whole term of the war, the reasons for it being distinctly stated in the Report, it was unnecessary for him to say a word more upon the subject. The avowal of the enemy to ruin our public credit, was the motive for an additional term of restriction; and when it was remembered that no injury, nor even inconvenience, had been sustained by the restriction hitherto, the House could not but think it a sufficient encouragement to adopt that now called for.

Mr. *Allardice* disapproved of the restriction, but at the same time disliked any connexion between the Bank and government, or any dependance of the former upon the latter.

Mr. *Nicholls* said, he continued to be as dissatisfied with the restriction as he was at first. The principle upon which it was now grounded was quite different from that upon which it was proposed last year. Necessity was the plea then: this year it appeared that the Bank had more than sufficient to pay all its debts. If the Bill, therefore, was adopted, it would be as matter of choice, not necessity; but whether it were of choice or of necessity, he had an insuperable dislike to its continuance during the war, since it would become a precedent for every future minister in future wars to stop payment. He did not like to see the Bank so closely connected with government.

Mr. *Wilberforce Bird*, as one of the committee, could assert that the Report was founded in truth and justice, and upon a fair consideration of the state of things. An hon. gentleman had objected to any connexion between the Bank and government; by the Report it would appear that they had lately been considerably dissevered. It was his opinion, that the restriction had been the salvation of the country.

Mr. *Tierney* declared, that, as an honest man, he could not assent to the measure, for he did not see why the Bank should be governed by a rule of moral conduct, different from that laid down for the regulation of other concerns, or how that which in individuals would be justly held fraudulent, should in the case of the Bank

be considered just and salutary. He should be glad to see the man who would hesitate to pronounce that the stoppage of payment would have been at least discreditable, if not fraudulent, if it had happened in the case of a private trader. An order of council had issued, directing the Bank to stop payment of cash, with certain exceptions; a committee was appointed to inquire into the grounds and expediency of that act, and of the circumstances that led to it. That committee made a report, stating an efficient and a remote cause for that procedure, but avowing at the same time, that the efficient cause would not have formed a just ground for the order of council, if it had not been preceded by the remote cause. If that remote cause were now in existence, he should hesitate to oppose the measure; but every circumstance that had contributed to form that remote cause, had not only entirely ceased, but circumstances in all respects the very reverse had taken place of them. One of the causes assigned was, that the exchange with Hamburgh was unfavourable and that gold was so high on the continent as to create a great drain of bullion from this country; but the present report stated, that the course of exchange with Hamburgh was at present unusually favourable for us, and that must necessarily have a tendency to bring gold into this country. Another reason was, the necessity of reducing their discounts at the Bank; but this did not exist now; for they were extremely liberal in their accommodation. Another was, the necessary supply of foreign powers, and of our troops on the continent; but neither of those now existed. Another was, that the balance of trade in our favour was diminished; that, too, was changed. So that there was not one operative cause for the order of council that had not given way to circumstances of a directly opposite nature; and yet, with all these opposite reasons, ministers called for the same measure. It was extraordinary, that the principal reason for restraining payment at the Bank, came from the Bank directors themselves; that they seemed to be most forward in it, and to outrun the eagerness of the chancellor of the exchequer; for before the right hon. gentlemen had said a word about the matter, the Bank directors came to the resolution: "That the affairs of the Bank are in such a state that it can with safety resume its accustomed functions, if the political cir-

cumstances of the country do not render it inexpedient." For a mere trading company to go out of its way so far as to suggest to government a question of political expediency, was unusual and wanton. Thus the measure of non-payment originated with the persons bound to pay. He must speak of the Bank as a body, in terms of disapprobation. They had received grace and lenity and indulgence from the public, and it was a hard return which they now made. They should have remembered with gratitude, that when they were obliged to stop payment, no disposition whatever was shown to harass them; on the contrary, every thing was done to aid and support them. Associations were formed for the purpose among the most respectable and opulent of the citizens of London, who unanimously agreed to support the Bank, to receive its notes as cash, and to fence it in from mischiefs that were apprehended. One would think that the consequence of this treatment would have been, that now, when they were declared in a state of prosperity, they would call those associations together again, in order to pay their promissory notes in cash, if required so to do; instead of which, they officiously suggested to parliament the expediency of continuing the restriction. In an individual this would not be honest, and the man who should practise it would certainly lose his character. On these grounds he would not agree to a renewal of the restriction; for if ministers were allowed to bring through the House the same measure, on grounds so totally different, what was it but to say, that whether the course of exchange be unfavourable or favourable, gold goes rapidly out of the country, or gold comes rapidly into the country; whether there be a drain on the Bank, or a vast influx of bullion into it, the House must sanction the Bank in the proposed measure, and justify them in saying to the public, "We, the Bank of England, owe you money, and here we have money in abundance, but will not pay you."—It appeared from the Report, that the governor and deputy governor of the Bank, who were examined touching the inconvenience that might have arisen from the restriction imposed on the Bank, and the expediency of continuing that restriction, had declared, that they were not aware of any such inconvenience; and that there could not arise any injury to the credit of the Bank, but on the contrary, advantage to the nation, from con-

tinuing the restriction. This he thought a most extraordinary assertion; extraordinary indeed, for the Bank to write on their notes "payable on demand," while they were determined to refuse that payment. If by no inconvenience they meant no pecuniary demands, no clamorous duns at their doors, no bailiffs to arrest them in the street, they were right: but if they were animated by that spirit which distinguished their forefathers, and rendered some of them, though but traders, not less illustrious than the first statesmen; if they were actuated by that generous, manly integrity, which raised the character of British merchants high enough to cope with the first men of the world, they would find a very heavy inconvenience in their own feeling, in the goading reflection, that they themselves, the Bank of England, was now under the censuring eye of all Europe, and that they are praying the parliament to continue them in a state of bankruptcy, which they themselves acknowledge to be unnecessary. But it appeared that now they were become deep politicians, and took upon them to inform the House that, from the nature of the war, and the avowed purpose of the enemy to attack this country by means of its public credit, it will be necessary to continue the restriction. That the enemy would aim a blow at our credit and finances all would agree, for all modern wars have been without exception carried on upon that principle. Modern wars are made upon resources rather than blood; but was this the way to prevent the enemy from succeeding? Most whimsical expedient! In order to leave to the enemy no credit to attack, they destroy credit themselves. But at last they speak plainly; at last it comes out, that "it will distress the financial operations of the country:" and then they deliberately weigh and find "That it will be expedient to continue the restriction, with the reserve of partial issues of cash, at the discretion of the Bank, and that it may be so continued with advantage to the nation, and without injury to the credit of the Bank." This was the result of the examination of the governor and deputy governor of the Bank of England. This was their advice. This precious plan, first originated in the diabolical but fertile mind of that monster Robespierre; but what had they to do with political considerations, or what had finance to do with the Bank of England? What was

it that raised the Bank of England above all the banks in the world, and fixed its credit upon so strong a base as to resist even the mortal assaults of the present time? What, but that it was unconnected with government, and had only to pursue the plain straight road of their own business, to act directly, to act strictly, and to fulfil its engagements with probity, having nothing to do with financial operations. In other countries, where a connexion subsisted between the bank and the state, and where of course ministers had the power of distorting the operations of the Bank to their own crooked views of finance, the Bank never was safe. In England there never till now was such a connexion, and the Bank, of consequence, was always safe; but it was much to be feared that hereafter men, in estimating the Bank, would look to the court, and measure the security of the former by the stability of the latter, founding their opinions on that subject rather on the wisdom of ministers, than the substantial property and integrity of the Bank directors.—He had said, that his first ground of objection to the measure was, that it was not founded in common honesty. There was another ground, and he would now state it; he thought the measure led to a principle, that if effected, would be extremely prejudicial to the monied interest. And here he would repeat what he had before professed, that if he was not in his conscience convinced that no hazard would attend the resuming of cash-payments, he would not say a word about it. The fear of an invasion had been stated as one of the reasons for not opening the Bank in the usual way; but if an invasion actually took place, he could not see how the withholding cash, and of course diminishing the credit of the Bank, would serve it. He wished some gentlemen better qualified would point out to him the difficulty, or what objection there could be to keep in the Bank a quantity of cash equal to the amount of the notes delivered out, which would establish the credit so firmly, that even in case of invasion every man being sure of receiving cash for his bills, would have no dislike to accept the notes of the Bank. Some, perhaps, would say, that if cash equal to the outstanding notes were kept in the Bank, there would be no profit on the business. But if he did not err, it might be done with advantage, and with the effect of giving new facility as well as credit and vigour to the operations of the

Bank. He would ask the Bank directors to be content only for one year without any profit; and every man being sure of payment if he called, would never think of demanding cash. If, while the Bank was unable to make cash payments, the associations already alluded to had kept up and supported and credited the Bank, was it to be doubted that they and all the people at large would continue to do so when they found the Bank had resumed its accustomed modes of payment? And this would be infinitely better than the present measure: for suppose an invasion, if the Bank were shut against payment, no one would take notes, for they would not be able to convert them into any substantial commodity; so that would not prevent the evil, nor facilitate the negotiation of Bank notes; and in the city, however prompt they may be to give loyalty loans, their procedure on the last loan showed that they were not in the main disposed to sacrifice much to their loyalty. They would soon remind the Bank, and say, "We did every thing for you, we discharged our duty to you, and you have not discharged your's to us; but instead of that you applied to parliament for a restriction, and thereby made that restriction your own act." If under these circumstances, the chancellor of the exchequer wished to have the Bank notes circulated, he must go the full length, he must adopt the vigour with the policy of Robespierre, and make them a legal tender, else the Bank would be blown upon. If the result should be fatal, which [he both feared and deprecated, it would be a source of affliction to the Bank directors, and the chancellor of the exchequer would fruitlessly lament his having intrigued with them. He much feared that the financial plan contained in the measure would unfold itself on Friday next, when the right hon. gentleman was to open his budget. For his part, he could put his hand to his heart, and declare, that as an honest member, he never would vote a shilling to his majesty's present ministers. At all events, if money must necessarily come, he wished it to come in a fair way.

Major *Elford* said, that in his view of the subject, the question laid in a very narrow compass indeed; certain circumstances of public alarm had created such a drain on the Bank in February last, as induced the executive power to issue an order to prevent its continuing its payments in specie. The measure was a bold

one, and that subsequent circumstances had sanctified it as a wise one. At the time this order was issued, various dreadful consequences were predicted, none of which had come to pass. It was agreed on all sides, that the policy of the enemy was, to injure our public credit. The question then was simply, whether it was not more politic to continue, during the war a restriction which had been found to produce none of those evils which had been foretold, rather than by discontinuing it, to run the risk that some future occasion might create a necessity for its being again imposed, and of our incurring those ill consequences by the second restriction, which had been falsely predicted of the first.

The House then went into a committee, in which it was agreed to limit the duration of the act to one month after the conclusion of the present war by definitive treaty. The Bill was reported on the next day, and passed without farther opposition.

Debate in the Commons on the Budget.]
Nov. 24. The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means,

Mr. Chancellor *Pitt* rose and said:—In pursuance of the intimation which I gave upon a former day, I now rise to state to the committee the general outline of the measures which are proposed as the foundations for raising the supplies, and for meeting the exigencies of the ensuing year. As the principle of that part of the intended plan to which I am most desirous to direct the attention of the committee is new in the financial operations of this country, as it is a principle so important in its nature, and so extensive in its consequences, it is not my intention to call for any decision upon its merit in the present stage of the business. All that I now mean to state to the committee, I wish to be considered merely as a general explanation of a plan that is afterwards to be brought forward. Any minute consideration and particular dispositions I shall omit till the subject is submitted to a detailed discussion, and content myself with a general view of the object proposed, and a general outline of the mode by which it is to be carried into execution. After the facts which are already in your possession, after the unanimous resolution which the two Houses of parliament have passed upon the subject, it would be unnecessary for me to dwell upon the

causes which demand your exertions, and the nature of the objects, which the supplies you are called upon to provide are intended to secure. The question which you have to consider is of no less importance than by what means you are to provide for the expenses which will be necessary to enable you successfully to resist the avowed intentions of an arrogant foe, to destroy your liberties and constitution, to cut off the sources of your wealth, your prosperity, your independence, and your glory. In pledging ourselves to withstand these haughty pretensions, and to defend the blessings we enjoy, we have not acted lightly. In expressing our determination to support the honour and the interest of the country at every hazard, we spoke equally the dictates of sober reflection, and the language of indignant feeling: our judgment was in concord with our ardour; we declared ourselves ready to meet the difficulty in its fullest extent, and prepared to support our resolution at every extremity. I wish to be understood, therefore, that it is upon these principles, that the plan which I am now about to explain is founded. I know that it is upon these principles, that parliament and the nation have pledged themselves to act; by these principles, and these only, the measures which are to be submitted to your consideration have been framed, and it is upon these principles that their propriety ought to be judged.

Before I proceed to enter more largely into the principles of the plan which it is my intention to propose, I shall briefly take a view of the amount of the expenses for which it will be necessary to provide. These I shall state under the usual heads, avoiding in the present stage of the business, all minute details, and considering only the amount of the supplies which will be required. I shall begin, then, with the sums that will be necessary for the service of the navy. The committee will recollect that there has already been voted for this branch, the sum of 12,539,000*l*. It will likewise be recollected, that the estimates of the present year have been made out in a new form, intended, with greater correctness than formerly, to present a full view of all the expense that would be necessary. Instead of the former allowance of 4*l*. per month, which was found to be inadequate, the full expense has been taken into view. Even in their present shape the estimates are not to be

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considered as so accurate as to exclude the possibility of any excess. All that can be said is, that they are now more likely than at any former period to include the whole of the expense which this branch of the service may demand. The amount voted, then, for this article is 12,539,000*l*. It is unnecessary here to specify the different heads of this branch: all that is requisite is, to point out the whole of the expense which we are called upon to devise measures to supply. Besides this sum, there will be a sum of navy debt, owing to the excess of last year above the estimate, amounting to three millions. This, however, will form no part of the expense for which it will now be requisite to make a cash provision. It will only be requisite to provide a sum equal to the interest; and in the present state of the funds, that provision cannot be calculated at less than 250,000*l*. By a regulation adopted last year to prevent the depreciation of navy and exchequer bills, by providing that the period of payment should never be very distant from their date, there will be on their monthly issue of 500,000*l*. a floating debt of 1,500,000*l*. to be funded, arising out of the excess of the estimates for the year 1797. There will likewise be a similar sum of 1,500,000*l*. falling due in the year 1799; but for these no cash provision will be necessary, nor are they included in the supplies to be raised. The sum of 12,539,000*l*. is all that enters into the account of the supplies under this branch for the ensuing year.

The expense for the army, excepting only barracks and extraordinaries, has likewise been voted. What the amount of the extraordinaries will be, it is impossible to ascertain; but so far as can be collected from the bills already drawn, this article may be taken at four millions besides the vote of credit, making an excess of about 1,300,000*l*. at the end of the year. In judging of the probable amount of the demands of this branch of service for the year 1798, it will be seen that there is no prospect of increase at home; that the situation of the war abroad promises to admit of a diminution; and that from the general state of affairs, many of the causes, which contributed to swell the extraordinaries of the army, cease to operate. The amount of the extraordinaries, then, may be taken at 2,500,000*l*. The charge on the head of barracks may be estimated at 400,000*l*. The expense of

guards and garrisons, and the general articles included under this head, has already been voted, amounting to 10,112,000*l.* The ordnance may be taken at 1,300,000*l.* and the various articles of miscellaneous service may be rated at 673,000*l.* There remain only two articles to be noticed, the sum of 200,000*l.* appropriated for the reduction of the national debt, and about 680,000*l.* arising from deficiencies of grants. From the whole, then, the committee will see, that the sum now to be provided for, amounts to about 25½ millions. Supposing the statements under the head of the army and navy to be correct, the expense on these branches will be reduced to the extent of 2½ millions; and, including the reduction on the head of extraordinaries, the saving upon the whole will amount to the sum of 6,700,000*l.*

Notwithstanding this diminution, however, there still remains the sum of 25½ millions to be provided for, as the supplies of the ensuing year. Before I proceed to explain the general plan proposed for covering this expense, I shall state the usual articles which compose part of the annual ways and means. These are the growing produce of the consolidated fund, and the land and malt. The former I shall take, along with the profit on the lottery, at so very small a sum as 700,000*l.*, making with the land and malt the sum of three millions and a half. There still remains, however, the sum of twenty-two millions to be supplied by some other means. The mode by which this sum is to be raised, forms the great object of consideration. The reduction upon the head of naval and military establishment does, indeed, amount to a very considerable saving. The committee will see with satisfaction that their expenses admit of a diminution below what was necessary in some former periods of the war. Pleasing as this circumstance certainly is, I will not disguise, however, that after the sums which have already been added to the national debt, after the burthens which have already been imposed, to raise so large a sum as twenty-two millions, is no light matter. But the difficulty is to be examined with a firm determination to exert every effort which the magnitude of the occasion demands, with a firm determination to produce the means by which the struggle is to be supported with vigour and with effect, so long as these continue to be the only course by which we can

maintain our national honour, and secure our national safety. After this decided resolution, to render these supplies effective, the next point to be considered is the mode by which the expense is to be defrayed, without danger to the sources of our prosperity, and without inconvenience to those who may be called upon to contribute.

Before I enter into the statement of the plan by which it is proposed to meet a considerable part of this expense in a manner rather new in our more recent financial operations, I shall mention one of the intended supplies which, under the restriction with which it will be guarded, I am disposed to think will be viewed as altogether unexceptionable. After what I have heard from some gentlemen on former discussions, I cannot expect that the measure to which I allude will encounter no opposition; but I am pretty confident that though not universal, the approbation which it will receive will be very general. This measure, however, is considerably different from that which some gentlemen conceive. I propose that towards the supplies the Bank shall make an advance to government. The sum which it is in contemplation thus to raise is neither very large in itself, nor will it be made in such a shape as to deprive the bank of the certainty of repayment within a short period, if it shall be considered expedient to take off the restriction on payment in cash. That under all the circumstances of our present situation that restriction is necessary, I cannot entertain a doubt. I confess, that, while the war continues in its present shape, it is my decided opinion that it would be unwise to discontinue that restriction. If, however, any unforeseen events of the war, or if the return of peace should supersede that necessity, the advances, which it is proposed should be made by the Bank, are to be upon such conditions as shall render them available for the payment of their debt. If such a measure should meet with the approbation of parliament, the Bank will consent to make the advance. If it is clear, then, that in the present situation of affairs the restriction is prudent, if, under the conditions intended to be stipulated with regard to the manner of repayment, this advance will be attended with advantage to the public service without any detriment to the Bank, I am at a loss to discover why we should decline an accommodation which, in the present circumstances of the

country would prove so material a relief. The sum of three millions, then the Bank will agree to advance on exchequer bills, to be repaid at a short period, capable of being prolonged if nothing occur to render that extension inexpedient, but still claimable by the Bank if any change in their affairs shall render it necessary.

There now remains to be supplied the sum of nineteen millions. According to the received system of financial operations, the natural and ordinary mode of providing this sum would be by a loan. I know that notwithstanding the magnitude of the debt already accumulated, resources are still left for supplying the public service by this means. I admit the funding system, which has been so long the established mode of supplying the public wants, though I cannot but regret the extent to which it has been carried, is not yet exhausted. If we look, however, at the general diffusion of wealth, and the great accumulation of capital; above all, if we consider the hopes which the enemy have conceived of wearying us out by the embarrassments of the funding system, we shall find that the true mode of preparing ourselves to maintain the contest with effect and success is, to reduce the advantages which the funding system is calculated to afford within due limits, and to prevent the depreciation of our national securities. We ought to consider how far the efforts we shall exert to preserve the blessings we enjoy, will enable us to transmit the inheritance to posterity unincumbered with those burthens which would cripple their vigour, which would prevent them from asserting that rank in the scale of nations which their ancestors so long and so gloriously maintained. It is in this point of view that the subject ought to be considered. Whatever objections might have been fairly urged against the funding system in its origin, no man can suppose that, after the form and shape which it has given to our financial affairs, after the heavy burthens which it has left behind it, we can now recur to the notion of raising in one year the whole of the supplies which a scale of expense, so extensive as ours, must require. If such a plan is evidently impracticable, some medium, however, may be found to draw as much advantage from the funding system, as it is fit, consistently with a due regard for posterity, to employ, and at the same time to obviate the evils with which its excess would be attended. We still may devise some ex-

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pedient by which we may contribute to the defence of our own cause, and to the supply of our own exigencies, by which we may reduce within equitable limits the accommodation of the funding system, and lay the foundation of that quick redemption which will prevent the dangerous consequences of an overgrown accumulation of our public debt.

Such are the advantages which the plan I am about to propose endeavours to combine. To guard against the accumulation of the funded debt, and to contribute that share to the support of the struggle in which we are engaged, which our ability will permit without inconvenience to those who are called upon to contribute, appears essentially necessary. The great object of such a practical scheme must be to allot fairly and equally to every class that portion which each ought to bear. As I have already stated then, it is my intention to propose, not for your immediate decision, but for your mature deliberation, the plan of raising, by a general tax within the year, the sum of seven millions. I am aware that this sum does far exceed any thing which has been raised at any former period at one time, but I trust I have stated sufficient reasons to show that it is a wise and necessary measure. I am sure that whatever temporary sacrifices it may be necessary to make, the committee will feel that they can best provide for the ultimate success of the struggle, by showing that they are determined to be guided by no personal considerations, that, while they defend the present blessings they enjoy, they are not regardless of posterity. If the sacrifices required be considered in this view; if they be taken in reference to the objects for which we contend, and the evils which we are labouring to avert, great as they may be compared with former exertions, they must appear very light in the balance.

It will be observed, that there will be twelve millions out of the nineteen still to be provided for in the way of loan. At present I state this circumstance merely in the cursory review I have taken of the whole supplies. In what manner it will be done must depend upon the views which the progress of affairs may afterwards suggest. Certain parts of this sum would probably be raised on different terms. Whatever part of it might be covered by the produce of the sinking fund may be borrowed as permanent debt, providing for its redemption on the same

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terms with the other permanent debt; other parts again may be borrowed upon a much earlier scheme of redemption. But to proceed to the mode by which it is proposed to raise this sum of seven millions.

It has been understood for a considerable time that a great increase of the assessed taxes was in agitation. I shall state the reasons why this branch of the revenue has been chosen as best calculated to combine the advantages, which I have already explained as desirable in the intended plan. The objects to be attained in the mode of executing this scheme are threefold. One great point is, that the plan should be diffused as extensively as possible: that it should be regulated as fairly and equally as possible, without the necessity of such an investigation of property as the customs, the manners, and the pursuits of the people would render odious and vexatious. That it should exclude those who are least able to contribute or furnish means of relief; that it should distinguish the gradation of classes; that it should admit of those abatements which, in particular instances, it might be prudent to make in the portion of those who might be liable under its general principles. I am aware that no measure can be devised adequately to provide for all these objects in all their details and in every particular instance. No scheme can be practically carried into execution, in any financial arrangement, much more in such a one as the present, with such perfect dispositions as to guard against every possible inconvenience and to render every individual application unexceptionable. These general principles, however, must be kept in view in every practical plan, and the great question in discussion will be, whether any means of apportioning the extent of the contribution can be found better calculated to preserve them entire than the provisions which I propose contain. It will at once occur that the taxes, known by the name of assessed, include so many objects different in their nature, so many objects in the present state of society, of real necessity, so many of optional use and of luxury, so diversified by modes and by the state of families, that in general nothing can afford a better test of expenditure than the way in which these taxes are combined. One great objection, that the poor who contribute to the assessed taxes yet may be entitled to be exempted from such a contribution as the

present, will thus be obviated in a striking manner. Those who contribute to the assessed taxes compose a number of about 7 or 800,000 housekeepers and masters of families, including a population of nearly four millions, on whom the sum will be raised. Who then are those who will be entitled to exemption? Those who already are not included at all, on account of their poverty, or those who, for the same reason, are discharged from payment? Whether this description includes the artificers and labourers who have a fair claim to exemption, there is at least reason to believe, from the best information that can be collected, that 500,000 housekeepers and masters of families, covering a population of between two and three millions, are so comprehended. Such is the extent of the total exemption.

The next object then is, to consider the effect of the contribution upon those classes on which it would be raised. The assessed taxes so far as can be ascertained, amount to a sum of about 2,700,000*l*. This sum as collected is levied on about 7 or 800,000 housekeepers, of whom it is ascertained that 400,000 do not contribute more than 150,000*l*. This, indeed is a little increased by the late additions, but in a very small proportion, as these additions chiefly affect those who belong to the superior classes. The proposed additional assessment, then, upon the whole contributors, would amount, on the whole sum of the assessed taxes, to something less than a treble contribution. Why it should be something less than treble, which would be about eight millions, will be explained in the sequel. When we see that 400,000 householders contribute only 150,000*l*. we shall see how small a part of the additional share will fall upon those who are most entitled to mitigation. In this extensive apportionment, too, we shall discover the modifications which it may be necessary to make, and the means to adapt it to the ability of the contributors. The assessed taxes obviously divide themselves into two classes. Those which in a great measure applied to inhabited houses, consisted of three duties; that which was known by the name of the old duty, the window duty, and the commutation duty, first imposed last war, and regulated in 1788: and of the different per cents since imposed, which may amount to about 1,400,000*l*. out of two millions and a half. In this both the high and the low classes were included; but among

the latter, 400,000*l.* contributed only 150,000*l.* The other consists of optional consumptions and luxury—the duty on servants, carriages, horses for pleasure, and that class of horses employed in agriculture, the proprietors of whom, in the present state of the country, one of the most opulent classes which it contains, could not be injured by such an addition to the moderate rate which is now paid. It will readily occur that, where there are houses which do not contribute for the optional, or class of luxury, there the inhabitant must be best entitled to favour and mitigation. On these, then, the burthen will fall much more lightly than on those, such as ourselves, and those who contribute to both divisions of the assessed taxes. There is another distinction likewise which will increase the facility of applying the relief, which it may be found proper to bestow. The house tax in the metropolis and other great towns, is more felt by the inferior classes than it is felt by the same class in the country. Persons in the same circumstances of life, who in the country pay only perhaps 2*l.*, in towns may pay three or four times that amount. It is the advantage of this plan then, that it will be in the power of the committee to make the contribution bear upon those who are best able to pay, and diminish the burthen of those who are best entitled to relief. It forms another characteristic advantage of the plan, that the relief which it may be expedient to give to the poor, will not materially affect the productiveness of the tax. There is reason to believe, from the best estimate that can be formed, that not more than 3 or 400,000*l.* is raised in all the metropolis. This includes, indeed, all who are entitled to relief, but it likewise includes all those who are best able to pay. If great cities and populous towns, contain a great number who, from their poverty, have a claim to exemption, they contain likewise a great proportion of the opulent class, who will be able to contribute in such a manner as to supply what it would be unfair to exact from the inferior class. Thus the two classes together will supply what is required without oppression to the poor, or defalcation of the tax. In this manner, following the gradations of ability, as they are clearly pointed out by the profits of voluntary or luxurious contribution, and the claims to relief, as they are ascertained by the nature of the taxes which individuals al-

ready pay, the full amount will be fairly collected, and the burthen justly distributed. In this way the first class of contribution will, on the whole, double the amount of what is already paid, though in some cases it may be more than double, in others considerably less. In this way 2,800,000*l.* may be obtained. Upon that class which comprehends the taxes on servants, pleasure horses, carriages, &c. it is proposed to treble the assessment. In the higher classes, where the quantity of assessed taxes may be considered as a fair criterion of opulence, the rate of contribution may in some cases be an addition of three and a half, and even, in the highest class of all, a quadruple of the present tax.—On the second description, there may be obtained about 3,900,000*l.* at the treble rate. Allowing 500,000*l.* for the highest class, the produce with the 2,800,000*l.* for the first class, makes more than 7,000,000*l.* If it were trebled on the whole, the produce would be more than 8,000,000*l.*; but it will now be sufficiently understood, that, from the modifications which it will be expedient to introduce, in many cases, instead of double, there will not be one rate, in some not one half rate, and others still less, to be exacted. Thus, from the treble allotment, there will be nearly one million to be divided in modification to alleviate the burthens of those whom it may be wise to exempt. In this manner each class will mutually contribute to the relief of those who are unable to sustain an additional burthen, and the 400,000 who now pay so small a proportion will continue to be protected from any severe exaction by the extent which the tax will receive from the more opulent class of contributors.

Thus the advantage of such an arrangement will allow sufficient latitude of relief, where relief should be given, without diminishing the productiveness of the tax. It will allow any exemption to those who have no means, not to those who are unwilling to contribute; of the former there may be many in number, but little in amount; of the latter, whatever the amount may be, I am sure the numbers will be few. I am sure that there cannot be a large proportion of men in any part of this country who will be unwilling to concur in those measures which are felt so necessary for the public safety, or who can refuse to contribute a part of their property for the preservation of all they possess. In such a cause no man can find the extent of his

contribution limited, but by the extent of his ability. In every class where the means exceed the actual necessity; in every case where the power of contribution exceeds the absolute demand, no man can surely be so unmindful of the duties he owes to his country, no man can be so blind to the interests he has to preserve, as not to feel that he makes the most frugal and generous option in contributing to defend the society, of which he forms a component part, and to maintain that station which he occupies. I am aware that I anticipate the wishes of every man who hears me, in thus proposing that the extent of the relief, which the poor will receive, will be defrayed by the rate of contribution varying with the property and the stake which men hold in the country, by attaching upon the same class with ourselves the additional burthens which the poverty of the lower classes will improve. In thus affording a proof of the sincerity of the pledge we have given by our readiness to make the sacrifices which it requires, I feel that I am equally in unison with the general sentiment of the committee, as with the great principles of policy and of justice. Speaking for ourselves, we thus disclaim every little jealousy of the extent of the burthen we are called upon to bear. We prove to the world that we are not limited by this or that contribution; we demonstrate that we calculate only the magnitude of the occasion, and consider only whether the effort be equal to the importance of the demand. I trust that the exertion will not be deficient, that the contribution will not be inadequate, but if it were found to be below the unexampled greatness of the cause, I am sure that the utmost alacrity would be shown to submit to still greater sacrifices, and to display more vigorous efforts. We have the satisfaction of knowing that, however heavy these burthens might be, if permanent, yet as temporary sacrifices they are light in the scale when weighed against this mighty crisis and extremity of defence, when compared with the horrors we have to shun, and the value of the blessings we have to preserve. If I am not deceived in the inquiries I have made, the greatest contribution will not exceed a tenth of the income of the highest class of those by whom it is paid. No man surely will think such a sacrifice too great for such a cause; he cannot think advantages too dearly purchased, if the effect of our preparation be to discourage

the extravagant pretensions of the enemy, to dissipate the vain hopes they have built on our supposed financial embarrassments, to animate confidence at home, to confirm the solidity of our power, and to maintain the sources of our prosperity.

Having thus explained the general nature of the plan proposed, I must not omit to suggest the precautions which will be necessary to prevent the contribution from being eluded on the one hand by a subsequent diminution of establishment, and on the other to make provision that a real change of circumstances may not expose individuals to an oppressive exaction. It is evident, however, that in order to make the tax productive, it must proceed on a past, not on a future assessment. For, Sir, every gentleman must feel, that if for the period this contribution is to be levied upon the people, the share each individual is to contribute, were to be regulated by future assessments, a great part of the benefit there is now reason to expect we shall derive from it, would be frittered away by concealment and evasion. It is, therefore, my purpose to propose, that not future but past assessments should be made the basis of the new contribution: because, *prima facie*, the most impartial evidence that can be obtained of the ability of each individual to contribute to the exigencies of the state is the amount of his expenditure of income before he has any temptation to lower it, in order to elude taxation. On the other hand, Sir, as cases may exist of some, who by accidental causes are rendered unable to support their present establishment; of others, who, having improvidently engaged in them, repent of their imprudence, and desire to return to a situation better adapted to their real circumstances; and of others, who, though able to pay their present assessments, can show themselves, by the proportion they bear to their income, to be unable to bear the additional weight of the new contributions, it is my intention, when the whole shall come in detail before the House, to propose regulations for the relief of such persons to be digested and modified in the best manner which so complicated a subject will admit. But while provisions of this kind are to be made in favour of those upon whom the assessment would be too severely felt, the House will foresee that it will be impossible, with any regard to the great and important object in view, to suffer the tax to be evaded by those

who, not deficient in ability, but wanting in inclination, to contribute to the necessities of their country, would abandon the establishments to which they have been accustomed, and diminish their expenditure, in order to avoid the tax. But if it be found that, in point of fact, they shall have resigned their establishments from inability to maintain them; and if they follow up that resignation with a declaration to be prescribed for the purpose, that the increased assessments would amount to more than a certain proportion, to be regulated on a future day, of their whole income, then they shall be entitled to relief. Sir, I am aware, that, though the House and the nation will, with few exceptions, concur with me in this, there will not be wanting those who will cavil at this mitigating provision, and allege that it will amount in its effects to a compulsory disclosure of property; but the House will immediately see that it falls short of that, and will view it in its true aspect, that is to say, as a provision intended to qualify, to mitigate, or to prevent any severity or injury that may arise to individuals from the difficulty, or rather the utter impracticability of drawing a precise line of demarkation between those who, on account of the property they possess are bound, and those who, from inferior circumstances, are unable to contribute to a supply for the exigencies of the state: no man can say that such a provision, coming with the effects of relief, is a hardship, and I am sure no man can say, that the tax would be efficient without it. These, Sir, are the outlines of the plan which I mean to offer to the consideration of the House in more minute detail upon a future day. If, when the whole has been examined, it shall meet the concurrence of, and be adopted by, the House, it will be found disengaged from many difficulties, embarrassments, and expenses, that lie in the way of other modes of taxation; for, Sir, the execution of it will entirely depend upon laws now existing, laws long in force, laws familiar to those who will be the objects of its provisions. To enforce it, no new power will be delegated, no new office created, no new expenses incurred.

Sir, I am aware that in contemplating a system of finance which professes to make property the basis of its assessments, and to be as diffusively, as generally, and as equally, levied as circumstances will admit, an idea will naturally suggest itself

to every one as it has to myself—I mean that assessed taxes, however differently apportioned to the circumstances of different persons, and however certainly they may attach on persons of opposite descriptions, are often eluded by a particular description of men of large property; you will see I mean those men who possess large capitals, and who, by denying themselves many of the enjoyments of life, hoard up money, and exclude themselves from assessment. How much this applies to the subject in consideration I will not now discuss, since it certainly applies no more to this than to a former mode of taxation; for I know no act to make property the subject of taxation while it is not rendered conducive to the pleasure or convenience, or rendered visible by the optional expenditure of the person who possesses it. If this objection has never stood in the way of taxation before, I am at a loss to suppose how it can be made an objection to this, and shall be extremely obliged to any gentleman who will point out a mode by which property so held in hand can be subjected to taxation or assessment. The proportion this class of individuals bears to the mass of the taxable part of the nation, is not sufficiently great to add any weight to the objection if it were made; and I submit it to the feelings and wisdom of the committee, whether in a case of urgency and importance like the present, nine-tenths of the community shall refuse to contribute to the support, the preservation, the existence, of the state, because no means can be found to compel the remaining tenth to contribute also. Undoubtedly if it be now necessary to make great contributions instead of incurring a large mass of new debt, and if that be the best mode of carrying on the war, it would be greatly advantageous to be able to get at some mode of assessing all property in all individuals; and so far it is to be lamented that the description of people of which I speak cannot be made subject to an assessment. But if, on the other hand, we can flatter ourselves, as I own I do, with the hopes of being relieved sometime from that necessity, then, even though the hoards of the penurious elude our search, it by no means follows that the nation will receive no profit from them; for, on a general plan, though utterly inactive in the expenditure of the possessors, they become active in some other shape, or in other hands, and always

find their level in the course of successive ages: so that though the scrutiny to pry into wealth, may for a time be baffled, the effects of that scrutiny never fail to be produced by time. If, however, I saw the means, or could suppose that means might be devised, by which such capitals could be made productive and useful to the state in way of revenue, I do assure the committee I should consider it an object too important at this time to be neglected; though I still consider them as making a part of the strength of the country upon the average principles of general resources. Yet, Sir, we might flatter ourselves that, independent of that compulsory power which the condition of such property denies us, a due proportion of it would, at least in some cases, be forthcoming at the solicitation of self-interest and self-defence; for if this is a time, as I contend it is, when the people of this country are called upon not to contemplate their wealth only for its enjoyment, not to indulge in prejudices, or opinions, or in doubtful speculations, but to take measures for the preservation of their existence now, and their security in future, and that for this purpose we are calling for money, not to be raised by loan with interest, to remain a heavy burthen on those who are to follow us, but by demand on capital, then ought the hoards of the penurious to be opened; then should those who, devoted to accumulation by ignorance of enjoyment, and early habits of frugality, have arisen from the lower rank and meanest employments, by rigid frugality and indefatigable industry, protected, fostered, and encouraged, by that happy system of government, and those equal laws, which enabled them and permits any man to emerge from the bottom to the top of society, and who, in contemplating their possessions, can scarcely have a hope but that of transmitting to their posterity those blessings and comforts they deny themselves—then ought they, I say, for the recollection of the benefits they have received, and for the sake of those to which they look forward, to consider themselves above all men, bound to come forward in defence of that system which afforded encouragement to their labours, nurture to their industry, vigour to their pursuits, and protection to their persons, their property, and their acquisitions: then ought such men to reflect, if they have the means, that this is the occasion on which they should come for-

ward; then ought they, who have an interest so great in the country, to see, that though it is impracticable to compel them, it is at least necessary for them to contribute, and that the necessity of the times is the most urgent, as well as the best of all compulsions; and come forward, not only uncompelled, but unsolicited, to offer their contribution. That some will have this feeling, and act upon it, I will not doubt—that all will do so, I am not so sanguine as to expect; but though they should neither come forward voluntarily, nor be subject to coercion, that can hardly be stated as an objection to the plan, unless something more unexceptionable can be presented in its place.

Then, Sir, their remains another, and a leading consideration. I have already stated the grounds on which I build my plan for raising seven millions of the nineteen that are necessary for the supply of the year. This leaves, as I have before mentioned, a sum of twelve millions to be raised by loan. And here a point, separate, indeed, in its nature, but not less important in its consequences properly claims your attention. I have stated that the sum of seven millions, to be levied in a direct way by increased assessments, is intended to make the quantum of the loan more moderate. But I shall now state another principle which would lay the security, the credit the efficient powers, and the resources of the country on a firm and immoveable foundation—a principle that will tend not to effect a diminution of our burthens for the present, but to prevent an accumulation of them for the future. The House will recollect, that, by means of the sinking fund, we had advanced far in the reduction of the national debt previous to the loans necessarily made in the present war, and every year was attended with such accelerated salutary effects as outran the most sanguine calculation. But having done so, we have yet far to go as things are circumstanced, if the reduction of the debt be confined to the operations of that fund, and the expenses of the war continue to impede our plans of economy: we shall have far to go before the operation of that fund, even under the influence of peace, can be expected to counteract the effects of the war. Yet there are means by which, I am confident, it would be practicable in not many years to restore our resources, and put the country in a

state equal to all exigencies. It is impossible, Sir, but we must feel ourselves bound by duty, if we wanted the encouragement of success, to proceed in the business, and to complete the work which has already had so much success, and even to provide, if it shall be found expedient or necessary, for more rapidly accomplishing that desirable object. Not only, Sir, do I think that the principle is wise, and the attempt practicable, to provide large supplies out of the direct taxes of the year, but I conceive it to be equally wise, and not less practicable, to make provision for the amount of the debt incurred and funded in the same year; and if the necessity of carrying on the war shall entail upon us the necessity of contracting another debt, the principle I have in view is such, that, with the assistance of the sinking fund to co-operate, we shall not owe more than at the beginning. I cannot, indeed, take upon me to say, that the war will not stop the progress of the plan of liquidation; but if the means to which I look be adopted, it will leave us at least stationary—it will leave us where we were; and besides the salutary influence it will have upon our credit and resources at home, it will produce the happy effect of demonstrating to the enemy, that, whatever the nature of the contest may be, or whatever its duration, our strength is undiminished, our resources unexhausted, and our general situation unimpaired; that the hopes they entertain of destroying the country through the medium of its finance, are as vain as their designs are wicked; and that, whatever measures they may think proper to adopt against this country, they will find us not at all disabled for the contest. But, Sir, it is necessary for me to be more explicit; and I will endeavour to make the point appear as clear to the House as it now appears to me.

If I must borrow twelve millions, four of those may be borrowed without making any additional debt; for the sinking fund will pay so much. There then will remain eight millions, which would be an additional permanent capital if suffered to be funded: for these eight millions, therefore, I would make a different provision, that is to say, I would propose that the increased assessed taxes, the plan of which I have already laid before the House, be continued till the principal and interest be completely discharged; so that, after seven millions have been raised

for this year, the same taxes in one year more, with the additional aid of the sinking fund, will pay off all that principal and intermediate interest. My proposition, therefore, if carried into effect, would not only furnish a current supply, but quicken the redemption of the national debt, without bearing harder on the people than they can conveniently sustain. This would speak a language to all Europe; this would speak a language to the enemy, that, by cooling the ardour of their expectations, and showing them the absurdity of their designs, will afford the best chance of shortening the duration of the war, and of lessening the duration and weight of our taxes. If you feel yourselves equal to this exertion, its effects will not be confined merely to the benefits I have stated in the way of general policy, and in a successful determination of the contest, but will go farther; it will go to the exoneration of the nation from increased burthens, and to the relief of those who are to follow us from the weight of the expenses of a war, waged in defence of a system which we have received from our progenitors in trust to be transmitted entire to our successors. Unless you feel you have a right to expect, that by less exertion you will be equally secure, and indulge the supposition that, by stopping short of this effort, you will produce a successful termination of the war, you must set aside all apprehensions of the present pressure, and, by vigorous exertion, endeavour to secure your future stability, the happy effects of which, I pledge myself, will soon be seen and acknowledged. I am aware it will be said, that it would be fortunate if the practice of funding had never been introduced; and that it is not terminated is much to be lamented; but if we are arrived at a moment which requires a change of system, it is some encouragement for us to look forward to benefits, which, on all former occasions, have been unknown, because the means of obtaining them were neglected. If, Sir, the whole sum be provided for in the manner I propose, instead of being funded, the advantages will be greater than those who have not been at the trouble to calculate it can suppose. In the mode I propose, the whole, with the interest on it, will amount to no more than sixteen millions; raise that sum, and you and your posterity are completely exonerated from it; but if, on the contrary, you will fund, it will en-

tail an annual tribute of 150,000*l.* for forty years, which makes a difference of not less than forty millions to those who are to follow you. These are the principles, this is the language, this the conduct fit for men legislating for a country, that, from its situation, its constitution, and its natural strength, bears the fairest title of any in Europe to perpetuity. You should look to distant benefits, and not work in the narrow circumscribed sphere of short-sighted, selfish politicians. You should put to yourselves this question, the only one now to be considered—"Shall we sacrifice, or shall we save to our posterity, a sum of between forty and fifty millions sterling?" And above all, you should consider the important effect such firm and dignified conduct will have in the progress and termination of the present contest, which may, without exaggeration, be said to involve every thing dear to yourselves, and to include in it the fate of your posterity.

The House will now judge how far I have succeeded in finding a criterion by which to mark out the distinctions and the proportions in the taxes I have proposed. They will decide how far I have succeeded in accommodating the different rates of increase to the circumstances of the different classes of society: they will determine whether I have given a plan that affords sufficient modifications, and just mitigations of the severity of the imposts. If there be any thing defective, I wish to supply it; if there be any thing erroneous, I am desirous to rectify it; if I have exceeded, I am willing to retrench; it is a measure of unprecedented importance, and it must be my anxious desire to be correct in it. I therefore court investigation—but I earnestly hope there will be no difference of opinion in the House, as to the principle upon which the measure is founded. As I have not been able to find, in any man of any party, a trace of doubt as to the sufficiency of our resources, I think I have a right to assume that there can be no difference as to our right to employ them; at least I can say that I have not heard a word of any avowed difference on that point in any corner of the country. Attested thus, I have produced a state of resources unimpaired even by this wasteful war: on any other account no difference can possibly arise upon this day. In the interval between this and the day on which I shall finally bring this subject before you, I will receive with at-

tention any observations that gentlemen may please to suggest; and I hope all will agree with me, that the question for consideration is not, whether the burthens proposed are heavy or unprecedented, but whether there is any option left to us—whether they are not dictated by unavoidable necessity, and whether any, better adapted to the circumstances of the country, can be devised to supply their places? Sir, having said so much, I will not follow it up with particulars, but move a resolution conformable to the general design I have laid before the committee; and I will postpone the particular parts of the plan to another day—the earliest that circumstances will allow.—He then moved, "That it is the opinion of this Committee, that there shall be paid a duty, not exceeding treble the amount of the duties imposed by several acts of parliament now in force, on houses and Windows and Inhabited houses, by the 6th, 19th, 24th, and 27th Geo. 3rd, and likewise the several additional duties of ten per cent per annum, imposed thereon by several acts of parliament, with certain exceptions and abatements."

Mr. *Tierney* said, that after having had the misfortune to be an auditor of the speech just delivered, he could not again face his constituents, if by remaining silent he gave it any sort of countenance. The whole plan of the right hon. gentleman, was that of a man determined, at all events, to raise money. One thing he must congratulate the House upon was, the dereliction of that peremptory tone which had usually accompanied his statements of the supplies required for the year. He had stated in the former session, that the new sources of supply he then proposed would not only make up for former deficiencies, but would amply meet the expenses of the current year; and yet the navy bills had exceeded the calculation one million and a half: he had proposed five millions for the Extraordinaries of the Navy, and yet it now appeared he had formed erroneous calculations to the amount of three millions, together with 4,500,000*l.*—no inconsiderable sum.—With respect to the extraordinaries of the army, the right hon. gentleman would, in like manner, find himself mistaken. The sum wanted for the year was 25½ millions; but even this sum he would not vouch would be sufficient unto the end of the year. This was the first time, on an occasion of this nature, when the right hon.

gentleman had forborne to ring changes on the prosperous state of the revenue. To find the revenue of the country in a prosperous situation, afforded him pleasure; but this by no means proved that there were not several circumstances which tended considerably to diminish this source of consolation.—With regard to the three millions proposed to be advanced by the Bank, he considered it as a most alarming circumstance that that body should wish the restrictions which proclaimed their bankruptcy should be continued, expressly with a view to financial operations. That the minister had obtained the previous consent of the Bank to the loan he had no doubt. Since the Bank had stopped payment in specie, there had been a considerable increase of its outstanding paper. He should be glad if any Bank director would tell him, whether the Bank was sincere in its remonstrances to the minister; and, if so, on what grounds it was now ready to advance two millions and a half on the land and malt, and three millions of exchequer bills? The Bank had stated, that its prosperity arose, in part, from the demands made upon it by government being reduced; and yet now, having, by reducing the advances to government, in a degree restored order to their affairs, they came forward with a fresh advance to accommodate the minister of the day, and thereby, on their own former statement, to court new hazard and incur fresh risks. He wished to be satisfied on what grounds the Bank refused him payment in specie (which specie it had in its coffers), whilst at the same time, it increased its advances to government? Nothing had given more cause for alarm, than that avowed connexion between the Bank and the government. The present measure would occasion an emission of paper to a considerably increased extent; and he was afraid it would have this tendency, that it would be expected of the Bank to advance still more, whenever future demands were made upon it.—With regard to the measure of raising seven millions, by additional taxes within the year, he was afraid it would have a very different effect upon the enemy from what the right hon. gentleman supposed; for it would serve to show them that the funding system was, in the opinion of the chancellor of the exchequer, at an end. It was a hard thing to see the same man who had brought the country to the extremity of ruin, now virtually confessing his inability to pur-

sue former methods of raising the necessary supplies, and crouching, as it were, to the Bank to help him out of his difficulties. Should this plan fail, the country would not be in the same situation it was before it was proposed: and even with this extraordinary exertion to raise so considerable a part of the current expenses, he much questioned whether the minister would be able to procure the loan that was wanted, on any better terms. He would ask, what was to be done the next year of the war? For, with the present administration, he held it impossible that this country could have peace.

The Resolution was agreed to.

Debate in the Lords on the State of Ireland.] Nov. 22. The Earl of Moira said:—It is impossible for me to avoid once more calling your lordships attention to the difficulty and danger of the present crisis. Since we met last session, there has been a material alteration in the affairs of this kingdom. The negotiation with France being broken off, is an event which may be productive of little short of the destruction, not only of this, but of the sister country. I wish your lordships to look forward to what must be the inevitable consequence of a farther continuance of the war with France, and what must be the situation of the country, if we are to proceed upon such a system of expenditure as is necessary to carry on such a war. Let us reflect upon the events that have happened since we met last. We have gained a decided victory over one of our enemies. But what, my lords, has resulted from it? It has parried a danger. It has removed a mischief that was apprehended. But are we to sit with our arms across and do nothing more? If the object of the enemy be to subvert our constitution, you should, in order to defeat that object, call forth the heart and spirit of the country. If any part has reason to be dissatisfied, we should give it the benefits of the constitution; not in words merely, but in substance and in fact. It is admitted on all hands that the danger is imminent. What ought we to do to enable us to meet it? I have observed with surprise, that a kind of consciousness has been professed of some inattention in calling forth all the vigour and resources of the country. I have seen a statement which I have a right to consider as a correct one, of the probability of a supply being wanted for the service of Ireland.

My lords, in such a contest as we are engaged in, I am astonished that any part of the kingdom should be suffered to hang like a dead weight upon the country. What is the situation of the trade of Ireland? Desponding, drooping and distressed; her labourers in penury, her manufacturers subsisting upon public charity. Look at the condition of the manufacturers of Dublin: 27,000 have been kept by the bounty of the public from perishing with want. Look at other parts of Ireland. I myself know that the manufacturers of Newry are almost stopt. Whence does this evil arise? While you are boasting of the increase of the British trade, how happens it that Ireland is reduced to a state of beggary? What does it proceed from, but from the internal state of that kingdom? Is not this country, then, bound to inquire into the evil, and to apply a remedy to it? That the evil exists, I have the most convincing evidence. What I have to speak of, are not isolated measures, not partial abuses, but what is adopted as the system of government. I will not, on the present occasion, enter into a detail of the heart-burnings which have reduced Ireland to her present calamitous situation. I may discuss them elsewhere. Here it will be sufficient to lament and deplore them. But in lamenting them, I will state that to my conviction these discontents have arisen from too mistaken an application of severities. Putting that consideration, however, out of the question, I will resort to this argument; suppose there have been grounds sufficient for these severities — another question will then arise upon the policy of them. My lords, I have seen in Ireland the most absurd, as well as the most disgusting tyranny that any nation ever groaned under. I have been myself a witness of it in many instances. I have seen it practised and unchecked; and the effects that have resulted from it have been such as I have stated to your lordships. If such a tyranny be persevered in the consequence must inevitably be the deepest and most universal discontent and, even hatred to the English name. I have seen in that country a marked distinction made between the English and Irish. I have seen troops that have been sent full of this prejudice, that every inhabitant in that kingdom is a rebel to the British government. I have seen the most wanton insults practised upon men of all ranks and conditions. I have seen the most

grievous oppression exercised, in consequence of a presumption that the person who was the unfortunate object of such oppression, was in hostility to the government: and yet that has been done in a part of the country as quiet and as free from disturbance as the city of London. He who states these things, should be prepared with proofs. I am prepared with them. Many of the circumstances I know of my own knowledge. Others I have received from such channels as will not permit me to hesitate one moment in giving credit to them. From education and early habits, we used to consider the curfew as a badge of servitude and oppression. The curfew, my lords, exists at this moment in the North of Ireland; and persons must put out their fires and candles at a particular hour. I have known an instance of a party knocking at the door of a person's house, and insisting with much abusive language, and many insults upon the candles and fires being immediately put out. I have known the master of the house, intreat, with much earnestness, that he might be permitted to keep a candle alight, for his child was in convulsion fits, and the mother was hanging over the infant to administer the necessary assistance. The party, however, still accompanying their commands with much insult, insisted that the light should be put out. But this circumstance, I see excites a smile in a noble lord opposite to me; but perhaps unintentionally.—I proceed now to more serious subjects. There is not one man, my lords, in Ireland, who is not liable to be taken out of his house, at any hour, either of the day or night, to be kept in a rigorous confinement, restricted from all correspondence with the persons who have the management of his affairs, be treated with mixed severity and insult, and yet never know the crime with which he is charged, nor the source from whence the information against him proceeded. I can furnish many instances, in which such cruelty has been exercised. Your lordships have hitherto detested the inquisition. In what did that horrible institution differ from the system pursued in Ireland. By the inquisition, a man was liable to be torn from his family and friends; his affairs might be ruined, himself and his children reduced to beggary, yet no crime might be advanced against him to justify the practice of such severity; and if he required to be confronted with his accuser, that first principle of all justice was de-

nled him; and he was left to groan in prison, under the dreadful uncertainty of the length of his confinement, and of his ultimate fate. It may be said, by those who distinguish between the system pursued in Ireland and the practices of the inquisition, that I have forced a comparison, because the torture has not been used in Ireland. What will your lordships say, when I inform you that the torture has actually been practised in the cases of the persons of whom I have been speaking? Men, indeed, have not been put to the rack in Ireland, because that horrible engine was not at hand. But I do know instances of men being picketed in Ireland till they fainted. When they recovered picketed again till they fainted—recovered again, and again picketed, till they fainted a third time; and this in order to extort from the tortured sufferers a confession, either of their own guilt, or of the guilt, of their neighbours. But I can even go farther: men have been half-hanged, and then brought to life, in order, by the fear of having that punishment repeated, to induce them to confess the crimes with which they have been charged. Good God! what must the general feeling be in a nation where such measures are adopted?—My lords, I could go much farther, but I choose to veil some of the most atrocious parts. These acts, which I have stated to your lordships, have been done so publicly, that I cannot but consider them as belonging to the system which has been adopted. They have been done in open day; and if you do not hear the recitals of them from the newspapers of Ireland, it is because they are not published, from the fear of the publishers being exposed to the vengeance of the government if they did publish them. I know that authenticated relations of the most oppressive conduct have been refused insertion in the Irish newspapers on this account. The printer says, “what punishment hangs over me if I do insert them?” What happened to the printers of the *Northern Star*? A party of troops went in broad day and destroyed the whole property, types and every thing, belonging to that paper. I enter not now into the nature of the articles inserted in that publication; but surely there were laws sufficient for the punishment of the publishers of that paper; for the criminal code of Ireland is more severe than any I have heard of. The laws, therefore, as I have before said, were sufficient for the

purpose. Your lordships have heard of a proclamation confessedly illegal, requiring the surrender of all arms from a free people. A man reared and educated in an opinion that the constitution allows every man to keep arms for his defence, and that nothing short of an act of parliament can deprive him of that right, might hesitate in bringing in his arms. What is the punishment? It is a contumacy, for which perhaps there might be some punishment, of a moderate nature. Yet what is the regular punishment in Ireland? A party of the military may go and burn his house, and totally destroy his property. I know of instances where this has been practised, because the district in which the property has been situated, has not brought in such a number of arms as it was conceived were contained in the district. The estimation of the quantity which ought to be surrendered must rest entirely, your lordships will see, upon loose and vague grounds.—Now, my lords, with these facts before you, I appeal to your hearts, what must be the sentiments of a country where such outrages daily happen, and where constant menaces make every man apprehend that he may be the victim of such oppression? Do not you see, that by such a system you place in the hands of the enemy an engine the most forcible as well as the most fatal? Can any thing be more formidable than a statement such as I have laid before you? Upon the accuracy of it, it is the dearest wish of my heart to be examined before the privy council, or at the bar of this House. I know that those who doubt the expediency of the measures that have been pursued, think it too late to alter them, and that the security of property stands on no other chance but the success of the system that has been adopted. My opinion is directly the contrary. I think the moment for conciliation is not past. I think that Ireland may yet be saved; but it can only be by an immediate change of measures—by holding forth oblivion of mischiefs on both sides, by an assurance that the law shall be administered strictly, without respect to persons, and with a fair and just intention of protecting every man in the enjoyment of those rights to which, if he be under no legal disability, he should, without making any religious distinctions, be held eligible. I declare solemnly, that if you go on a little longer in the present system, all hope is lost of seeing Ireland connected five years longer

with the British empire. You say the Irish are insensible of the benefits of the British constitution, and you withhold all those benefits from them. You goad them with harsh and cruel punishments, and a general infliction and insult are thrown upon the kingdom. I have seen, my lords, a conquered country held by military force; but never did I see, in any conquered country, such a tone of insult as has been adopted by Great Britain towards Ireland. It is not my intention to make any motion upon the subject. My object is, to submit it to the consideration of government. I have made a last effort. I acquit my conscience. I have done my duty, and I leave it to his majesty's ministers to reflect upon the facts I have stated to them.

Lord Grenville said, that he felt it a matter of no small delicacy and difficulty, to attempt entering on the question which the noble lord had thought proper to introduce, or the vague grounds and isolated facts upon which it was endeavoured to be supported. Indeed, the noble lord seemed fully aware of his own deficiency in that respect. The noble lord was undecided, as to the manner in which he ought to proceed. Nor should the noble lord's indecision excite any surprise. The discussion which he seemed desirous to produce could be attended with no advantage; it was, on the contrary, a discussion pregnant with mighty mischief. He was unable to discern what should alienate the affections of Ireland, or indispose her from uniting in the general co-operation against the enemy. That such, however, was her present disposition, was more than insinuated by the noble lord, who accused government of being hostilely inclined towards the sister kingdom, and eager to keep up in it a system of coercion. He might, however, confidently appeal to their lordships, if it had not been the uniform disposition of government to adopt an opposite line of conduct. For the whole space of thirty years his majesty's government had been distinguished by the same uniform tenderness of regard by the same undeviating adherence to the mild principles of a conciliatory system. Indeed the whole of that period is throughout endeared by unceasing acts on the part of his majesty, of love favour, liberality, and kindness. Among these various instances of concession and conciliation exhibited by this country towards Ireland, he might advert to the es-

tablishing of its parliament into an independent legislature, and a wide extension of its commercial privileges. He was not therefore disposed to go to the extent of saying, that we had any pretensions for watching over the safety of Ireland by our legislature. This was the duty of its own parliament; and what idea must that parliament, whose independence we have sanctioned, conceive of our proceedings, should we entertain a discussion like the present? He would therefore contend that the agitation of the question would be an undue interference in a matter solely belonging to the internal government of Ireland. He would now proceed to the general statement of the cruelties which the noble lord asserted had marked this system of coercion which he so bitterly inveighed against, and which, he insinuated was principally promoted and acted on by the British military. But it was no difficult matter to vindicate the British military from any imputation of the kind; for humanity and good nature were the characteristics of the English disposition. That there might be individual exceptions but if such excesses had been perpetrated were there no courts of justice. Indeed, if a system so rigorous and cruel had been pursued, it must naturally be resented by a spirited and independent people. But what was the object for which these troops were sent over? Were they not sent over to counteract the machinations of a set of men who were plotting the destruction of the country, and favouring the designs of our inveterate enemy? If against such men they have at times been incited to acts of harshness and severity; if they had been occasionally warmed into a sense of indignation that broke out into insults and outrages, could it excite surprise? What more natural than that a large body of men should feel indignant against the abettors of a conspiracy to deliver up the country to the French invader? And that such a conspiracy existed had been proved beyond the possibility of a doubt. Had it not been proved in courts of justice that money had been distributed to hire assassins to murder those who were inimical to their traitorous plans, and to intimidate all witnesses from coming forward to give evidence against them, and to deter juries from giving in a conscientious verdict? Did they not hang the same terrors over the heads of the judges and magistrates, to scare them from the performance of their sacred duty? Was this a system which

could be viewed with the cool composure of civil prudence? Impossible. And if it instigated some individuals to acts of outrage and of cruelty, those crimes and cruelties were imputable to the men by whose unprincipled conduct they were provoked. Keen, notwithstanding must be the regret which such unwarrantable revenge must excite in every humane breast. And here he would heartily join in the tribute of praise paid by the noble lord to the present viceroy of Ireland. He held him dear as his friend; but it was not the partiality of friendship that prompted the praise he was ready to bestow on him. No public man, placed in so trying a situation, had ever displayed more exemplary moderation in the discharge of a painful duty; no public man had ever more zealously exerted himself for the benefit and happiness of the people over whom he had been sent to rule; but if his benevolent exertions were defeated by those whom he would willingly protect, if rigorous measures were necessarily pursued, no blame could surely be imputed to him; the circumstances of the country required it, and if any partial abuses did exist, we had only to lament them. He could not, therefore see what utility could be derived from the removal of a person, whose conduct in every respect was highly commendable. Nor ought it to be forgotten that it was not the English military who solely acted on these lamentable occasions. Were not many of the nobility and gentry of Ireland actively employed in the same service: and must they not naturally feel infinite regret at being driven to measures of violence? What motive could be supposed to actuate their conduct, but the general safety? But this was an object which could never be compassed by the system recommended by the noble lord. On the contrary, it would only tend to vilify the government, and bring all its measures into contempt and disgrace. The contrary system must therefore be persevered in: and to the spirited exertions of the English military, should we owe the preservation of Irish laws, of Irish property, and of Irish lives. And what again, was the object of the conspiracy which their endeavours were exerted to baffle and to crush? Was it not a separation of Ireland from the British empire?—And as to the liberty of the press, to what horrid abuses had it not been converted? He held in his hand a printed paper, the contents of which were too shocking to be

read: it would suffice to say that its avowed object was, to point out innocent men to the poignards of assassins. It contained a list of the names of those who, at a future period, were to be murdered. It loaded his majesty with the most opprobrious epithets, and reviled the English nation with every term of contumely. It held it out to be the duty of every Irishman to wrest from the hand of English ruffians the property which those English ruffians had wrested from their ancestors. This was no obscure or ambiguous language; it pretty clearly developed their favourite project of separating Great Britain and Ireland—an object suggested by France, and of which France was desirous to promote the accomplishment. Such was the situation to which an open conspiracy of profligate men had reduced the sister kingdom. And how could this situation be meliorated, or the danger that threatened that country be repelled, but by a system of severe and vigorous laws? Nor can those laws be enforced without entrusting great powers in the hands of those on whom we imposed the performance of this arduous duty under severe responsibility. The question, therefore, was, would their lordships interpose on the present occasion, and tell the parliament of Ireland and the Irish magistracy, that we were more careful of the interests and happiness of the Irish people than they were, and that the English military were not to obey the Irish laws, but the arbitrary instructions of the British parliament.

Debate on Mr. Pitt's Proposition for trebling the Assessed Taxes.] Dec. 4. The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means,

Mr. Pitt said, that as upon a former day he had fully stated to the committee the outline and general plan of the mode by which he proposed to raise a considerable part of the supplies for the ensuing year, by an increased assessment of the assessed taxes, he should have little more to do than to explain the proportions which he proposed to attach to the several classes of individuals, according to their income, and submit them to the consideration of the committee, in the shape of distinct resolutions. Before he proceeded to do this, however, he begged leave to recapitulate the general grounds on which he meant to bring forward his propositions. The present was a moment

which demanded an unusually vigorous exertion; and every gentleman, he trusted, was assured, that the cause of this exertion did not arise from any neglect of our own, to prevent the farther prosecution of hostilities, but from the obstinacy and ambition of the enemy. He had stated on a former day, that if there was any one point which more particularly demanded circumspection than another, it was, to avoid, by every possible means, a farther accumulation of our funded debt; for that was the point against which the machinations of the enemy were directed. It was his principal object, therefore, to prevent an increase of government paper in the market, and at the same time to prevent an accumulation of the permanent debt. These were the ground-works of his plan. If gentlemen would look at our universal credit, the stability of that credit, and the safe existence of the country, they would be convinced, that we were not only able to obtain these objects, but to provide for the redemption of the loan which would be farther necessary to discharge the annual expenditure, by a temporary continuation of the measures he suggested, aided by the assistance of the sinking fund. If he were asked, what would be the best plan for attaining these objects, he should reply, that none appeared to him so equal as an increased assessment of the assessed taxes; and that the fairest criterion for judging of the proportions which ought to be paid by the various classes of society according to their income, was the return of the assessed taxes. His first reason for giving the preference to an increased assessment of the assessed taxes was, because he could therefrom deduce a considerable contribution from a large class of housekeepers, whom he conceived to be both able and willing to pay, amounting to 800,000. All of these were masters of families, and comprehended under their roofs a population of four million.—His next reason for choosing this mode was, because it excluded all the inferior and labouring classes of society, who were unable to contribute to the exigencies of the state, and whose poverty, in consequence, required an exemption. Thus far the committee would perceive his plan had the utility of embracing whatever ought to be embraced, and omitting whatever ought to be omitted. As the purchase of some conveniences were necessary, and some a voluntary expenditure, his next duty was,

to draw a line of distinction between these objects, and endeavour to allow some modification and abatement to the former. This object would also be obtained by the measure he proposed.

He would now state to the committee the manner in which he intended to arrange and subdivide the proportions; and, in doing this, he had two extreme difficulties to overcome; first, to take especial care that no person, who possessed the means of paying, should escape the due proportion of their contribution; and secondly, to be careful to afford an ample relief to every individual, whose situation entitled them to such a claim. He reminded the committee, that he had stated the product of the assessed taxes at present to be 2,700,000*l*. Some had not hitherto been collected, but he believed they would not fall far short of their estimate, which was taken at 600,000*l*. The assessed taxes consisted of two descriptions, which deserved a separate consideration. The first comprehended the tax on houses, the tax on windows, the old assessments upon houses, the commutation tax, and the two additional 10 per cent duties upon the whole amount, making in all a general sum total of 150,000*l*. This the committee would perceive was but a small proportion of the whole sum collected by the assessed taxes; and it consequently showed, that every care had been taken to avoid too hard a pressure upon those individuals whose situation and circumstances claimed relief. The other description contained all the same charges upon houses, windows, the commutation act, and the 20 per cent additional duties, while 1,300,000*l*. was raised upon male servants, horses, carriages, dogs, and watches. It was his intention, therefore, as these were chiefly articles of luxury, to triple the duties upon the latter, while he took care to have the proportions of the former modified. In that division, however, the only difference from the division he had submitted to the House would be a transfer of the duties upon dogs and watches to the first class; because they might, in general, be considered as tests of affluence. A single dog or watch, however, would be comprehended in the modification as articles of convenience, and not of luxury.—Here the committee would observe that there would be no defalcation in the estimated produce of the tax upon the higher orders, by the reduction of the contributions

upon those who merely subscribe for conveniences, since it was evident the higher orders would not only be taxed for the enjoyment of their luxuries, but for the enjoyment of their conveniences also.

He should now state to the committee the different proportions of contribution which he should affix to the different classes of those housekeepers who came under his first description, of subscribing only to the house and window tax, the commutation tax, and the additional 20 per cent duties, till the gradations ascended to the treble rate. Such persons as inhabited houses, without apportioning a part thereof to lodgers, he concluded, would not wish for exemption or relief. His next consideration then was, to endeavour to determine at what rate the proportions should be made, until the gradations did attain the treble rate. All housekeepers, who paid the duties only upon houses, windows, and the commutation tax, would not find a triple rate of the assessment attach, unless they already paid at the rate of 3*l.* a year to the assessed taxes. Thus, for instance, all who inhabited houses, without apportioning a part thereof to lodgers, he conceived could not wish for exemption or relief. His next duty then was, to determine at what rate the different proportions should be fixed upon those housekeepers, who subscribed rather for convenience than luxury, till the gradation ascended to the treble rate. Where the present rate was under 1*l.*, he should propose to make an assessment only of one half of the present rate, and circumscribe the payment to 10*s.* Where the present rate was one pound, and under two, he should propose the increase of a single rate, or 20*s.*; and where the present rate was two pounds, he should make the assessment only double. Thus where persons paid 2*l.* at present to the assessed taxes, they would pay 1*l.* more, and where they paid more than two, but under three, they would pay only 1*l.* 10*s.* Gentlemen would see by this statement, how favourable the plan was to the poor and industrious classes of society. Nearly 330,000 housekeepers would only pay one half of their present rate, in addition to what they already pay, which was only one-sixth of the tax imposed upon the higher orders: 130,000 would only subscribe a single rate of their present assessment, or one-third of what the superior classes would contribute; while, in the higher orders of society, the

duties levied would be more than treble the amount of what they now subscribe. There would be 70,000 persons to whom the increased assessment would be only double, and 530,000 to whom the modifications of abatement and relief would be extended. Notwithstanding these modifications, comprehensive as they were, he had every reason to believe that the diminution of the product of the tax, by such abatements and relief, would be less than he had allowed for on a former day. There was another abatement, however, still to be allowed; for, while they endeavoured to raise a contribution necessary for the exigencies of the times, it was their duty to prevent any of those contributions from pressing too hard upon those, whose condition was entitled to indulgence and consideration. But before he described the nature of this abatement, he would state the proportions which he intended to affix to those classes who subscribed beyond the tax which he had already mentioned, as a limit ascending to that class of persons who kept horses and carriages, and who could not conscientiously demand the same modification, as they who, at present paid no more than 3*l.* for assessments. He reminded the committee, that according to the statements which he had laid before them, there was one class of people, consisting of the poor and the laborious, which would not contribute in any degree; and the subscription of the second class would not exceed 3*l.* It was now his duty to subject all those who paid at present for any of those luxuries which he had specified, namely, horses and carriages to a treble assessment, because it must be inferred that their incomes would justify such an assessment. The limits of this class would come in the following order: all who paid at present more than 30*l.* a year to the assessed taxes, he should suppose could not be worth less than 1,000*l.* a year, and could, of course, contribute a treble amount of their present subscription. A heavier rate than a treble increase of the present assessments ought, in due proportion to the supposed increase of income, to be laid upon those persons who pay at present more than 30*l.* per annum to the assessed taxes; and, therefore, for those who at present paid from 30*l.* to 50*l.* he should propose the increase of a treble assessment and one-half; and for those who paid more than 50*l.* an assessment to four times the

amount of their present contribution. This statement comprised the whole of the charge, in proportion to the supposed income of the different classes who were to defray it; and in making that proportion, he had endeavoured to fix it as equally as he could. Some farther criterion was necessary to prevent the tax from pressing too hard in particular cases upon persons already contributing beyond their due proportion; for it so happened, that the assessed taxes pressed much harder upon people of the same class in the metropolis and in large towns, than in the country; and he had recently been informed, that on account of local situation, a residence in a street, or certain peculiarities of trade, there was a grievous inequality. Some persons on account of these circumstances, he understood paid from 1 to 2, 3, 4, or 5*l.* per annum, more than others of the same class and income. The only mode of correction which he could suggest, was that of allowing an abatement below the charge of the assessment, on a declaration of the person so surecharged, not of the precise amount of his income, which might be an imprudent and dangerous request, but on a declaration that his income was not sufficient for such a contribution. Upon such a declaration, made before four commissioners appointed for such purposes, the party should be relieved in a given proportion to his competency. Whether the duties proposed were affixed at one half of a single rate of the present assessments, or rose in proportion to treble their amount, it was his intention to propose a resolution to the committee, that if the party assessed should make a declaration in the manner above described that his annual income did not amount to 60*l.* he should be exempted from the additional assessment. If his income amounted to 60*l.* he should only pay at the rate of a 120th part of that income, which would be a proportion of 10*s.* And so he proposed to go on varying his propositions in a regular ratio to 200*l.* above which he did not intend to allow any abatement of the treble duty, unless a declaration should be made, purporting that the charge exceeded one-tenth of the party's income, as he never intended to burthen an income of 200*l.* and upwards, with more than one-tenth.

His next consideration was, in what manner, the modification was to be applied. He proposed that it should be

applied as the case of the individual and circumstances might require. In regard to the mode in which the abatement should be made, and upon what proof, he knew of none better than that which he had before stated—a declaration of the person's inability to pay, or of the undue proportion of the assessment to his income. This declaration should be confirmed, if necessary, by oath. In order to render the payment of the tax more secure, he should wish to have the names of the persons applying for abatement, together with their declaration, and the amount of the relief which they should apply for, made public. For, as he conceived the committee would agree with him in the desire not to have a greater burthen imposed upon any individual than he was able to bear, so on the other hand, he conceived that every person applying for relief would be contented to declare what the amount of his income was. This was the extent of the proposition which he should afterwards submit to the committee upon that subject. On a former day he had proposed that no exemption should be made in favour of those persons who had contributed to the assessed taxes in any considerable degree during the present year, unless a change of circumstances rendered such an exemption necessary, and a declaration were made to that effect. He had since been induced to believe that such an exemption would neither be necessary or advisable, and therefore the only privilege he should affix to persons in that condition would be, leave for them to make a declaration in the ordinary way. He next informed the committee of his intention to propose, that it should be enacted, that in stating the income to the commissioners, there should not be a statement on the opposite side of the taxes among the other articles of expenditure, and his wish to exclude the statement of the taxes paid by the person applying for relief, was, because there were many instances where other people paid a larger rate than the proportion of their income. Of this class were innkeepers, who, on account of the extent of their buildings and the number of windows, paid five or ten times as much as other people of a similar rank and station. The same thing would apply to many other trades; but as he wished to avoid a complicated detail of the exemptions which should be afforded to different

people of this class of different incomes, he chose rather to leave the whole of these modifications and abatements to the decision of the commissioners upon a declaration. In respect to the appointment of the commissioners, he wished to have the investigation assigned to those, who, from local situation, might be most familiar with the true state of the person's condition who came to make the declaration. For this reason he should wish to have them appointed out of each parish, and to select those housekeepers who already paid the largest proportion to the assessed taxes, and who, from their situation and circumstances, would not be likely to want relief themselves. This included all the regulations which he should at present submit to the committee. He had other resolutions to offer, which he should reserve to a subsequent period, as they did not now apply. Where a favourable change of circumstances had produced an increased rate of the assessed taxes in the present year, and such changes did happen every year, it was his intention to propose a resolution, that the additional assessment should fall on the increase, and where cases occurred of an increased income, he should propose to treble the rate of the present assessment.

He would now state how far the different modifications and abatements were likely to affect the general produce of the tax. And here he reminded the committee, that he had estimated the produce at 2,700,000*l.* only; though a treble increase of the present assessed taxes, supposing them to be of the amount which he had estimated, would be 8,161,000. From the present amount the charge of collection was to be deducted, which would be 90,000*l.* The charge of collection, however, for the new assessment would be small in proportion, as the same persons would be able to collect both. But yet they would have a claim to some remuneration for their trouble. As the present charge of collection amounted to little less than 100,000*l.* the triple amount of that sum, which would then only be in proportion to the assessment, would be 300,000*l.*; but he would only take 2-3rds of that amount for the charge of collection, namely, 200,000*l.*, leaving the other 100,000*l.* to be applied to the other modifications. The general amount then, he trusted, would not be less than 8,000,000*l.* What the abatements might be, was merely conjectural; but what was not

conjectural, would be the relief which the plan would afford in certain cases, in proportion to the income, and the modification which he had stated, appeared to obtain so essential a relief, that he should propose a resolution for it. As this abatement would only apply to those who did not possess an income of 200*l.* a year, there would not be many, he conceived, who would claim it, for there were many persons who resided in the country, who paid but 6*l.* or 7*l.* a year, to the assessed taxes. What the amount of such abatements might be, therefore, he did not know; but as he had taken only seven millions for the general amount, though the average of a triple assessment would be 8,000,000*l.* he trusted there would still be room left for his abatements. Against this expected reduction, much might be said also upon a more rigid enforcement of the due collection of the tax. The present plan was not the first which led to the discovery of evasion, but the investigation made, in order to render the plan more accurate, had certainly confirmed it. He was sorry to say, that a most shameful evasion did exist, and gentlemen would see, in looking over the accounts upon the table, many persons of the same class as themselves who contributed in a very disproportionate degree. He was resolved, however, if possible, to put an end to this sort of fraud.

He had only one other modification to propose. Where the taxes were increased by a large and numerous family, he thought there should be some exemption. Where the family was large and the children unmarried, he thought the rate should be taken one or two classes below the income, and where there was no family, that it ought to be taken one or two classes above it. It was not necessary for him to state more at present. If it was right to make unusual and vigorous exertions, those exertions should be confined within reasonable bounds. The principle point of inquiry then was, what mode was best? That certainty which ascertained the proportions of contribution as nearly as possible to the actual amount of property and income. Could there be a call, then upon income more general, more effectual, or more comprehensive than that which he had proposed? Could there be a plan which embraced more necessary abatements; which allowed more just and necessary exemptions; which was founded on a more accurate criterion; or which

regulated the proportions of wealth, circumstance, and situation, with more fair and equal justice? The demand was a great one; but the demand must be a great one, for there was no way of drawing seven millions out of the pockets of the people without making them sensible of the grievance. All taxes were grievances; but a sacrifice of part of the public property, was obliged to be made for the preservation of the whole. He did not think it necessary to add more but should move the following Resolutions:

1. "That it is the opinion of this committee, that towards raising the supply granted to his majesty, every person assessed to any of the duties now payable on male servants, on carriages, or on horses, either separately or together, with any other duties now placed under the management of the commissioners for the affairs of taxes, shall be charged annually, during a term to be limited, with an additional rate or duty, in proportion to the amount of the duties (except the land-tax) to which such person is assessed, according to the last yearly assessment or assessments, made in pursuance of any act of parliament now in force, prior to the 5th day of April, 1798, and the proportion thereof shall be as follows, viz.—Where the amount of the said duties now payable shall not exceed thirty pounds, a duty equal to three times the amount thereof:—Where the amount of the said duties now payable shall exceed thirty, and shall not exceed fifty pounds, a duty equal to three times the amount, and one half the amount thereof:—And where the amount of the said duties now payable shall exceed fifty pounds, a duty equal to four times the amount thereof:—And that where any person shall be so charged to any such assessment, made for a less term than a year, the additional rate or duty shall be computed on the aggregate amount of the sums contained in such assessments, and of such farther sum to be added thereto, as would be payable thereon, if the same were made for a whole year.

2. "That it is the opinion of this committee, that towards raising the supply granted to his majesty, every person assessed to any of the rates or duties now payable, and placed under the management of the commissioners for the affairs of taxes, such person not being assessed to any of the duties on male servants, carriages, or horses, shall be charged annually, during a term to be limited, with an additional rate or duty in proportion to the amount of the duties (except the land-tax) to which such person is assessed, according to the last yearly assessment or assessments, made prior to the 5th day of April, 1798, in pursuance of any act of parliament now in force; and the proportion thereof shall be as follows, viz.—When the amount of the said duties shall be under one pound, a duty equal

to one half the amount thereof:—Where the amount of the said duties shall amount to one pound, and shall be under two pounds, a duty equal to the amount thereof:—Where the amount of the said duties shall amount to two pounds, and shall be under three pounds, a duty equal to twice the amount thereof:—And when the amount of the said duties shall amount to three pounds or upwards, a duty equal to three times the amount thereof:—And that where any person shall be so charged by every such assessment made for a less term than a year, the additional rate or duty shall be computed on the aggregate amount of the sums contained in such assessment, and of such farther sum to be added thereto as would become payable thereon, if the same were made for a whole year.

3. "That it is the opinion of this committee, that every person charged to the additional rate or duty, to be imposed towards raising the supply granted to his majesty, shall, upon proving to the satisfaction of commissioners to be appointed for that purpose, that the amount of his or her annual income, after deducting the amount of the duties contained in the last assessment of the duties now payable, is less than the sum of 60*l.* be exempted from the said additional duty; and in all cases where such annual income amounts to 60*l.* or more, such person shall be entitled to such an abatement of the additional duty to be granted, as may be necessary to reduce the same in each case respectively, in the proportion hereinafter stated; that is to say;

"Where the said annual income shall appear to be not less than

£.	£.	
60 but under 65	65	1-120th part of the same.
65	70	1-95
70	75	1-70
75	80	1-65
80	85	1-60
85	90	1-55
90	95	1-50
95	100	1-45
100	105	1-40
105	110	1-38
110	115	1-36
115	120	1-34
120	125	1-32
125	130	1-30
130	135	1-28
135	140	1-26
140	145	1-24
145	150	1-22
150	155	1-20
155	160	1-19
160	165	1-18
165	170	1-17
170	175	1-16
175	180	1-15
180	185	1-14
185	190	1-13
190	195	1-12
195	200	1-11
200 and upwards		1-10

"And where the said annual income shall appear to be not less than 200*l.* every such person shall be entitled to such an abatement of the additional duty now granted as may be necessary to reduce the same in each case respectively to a sum not exceeding one-tenth part of the said income.

4. "That it is the opinion of this committee, that towards raising the supply granted to his majesty, every person who shall by any assessment to be made after the 5th day of April, 1798, be assessed in respect of the duties now payable to a greater amount than the amount contained in the prior assessment, shall be charged with a farther additional rate or duty, in proportion to such latter assessment, from the commencement of the year in which such latter assessment shall be made.

5. "That it is the opinion of this committee, that towards raising the supply granted to his majesty, every person not assessed within the year ending on the 5th day of April, 1798, to any of the duties now payable, and who shall be assessed to any of the said duties in any subsequent year, shall be charged with the like additional rate or duty, on the amount of such assessment, from the commencement of the year in which such assessment shall be made, and subject to the like abatement as if such person had been assessed to the said duties within the year ending on the 5th day of April, 1798.

6. "That it is the opinion of this committee, that towards raising the supply granted to his majesty, every person whose last assessment shall be increased by any surcharge to be allowed, shall be charged, in respect of such increased assessment, in the like proportion as if such surcharge had formed a part of the original assessment.

The first Resolution being put,

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, he could not approve of the principle upon which the resolution was founded. It was founded upon an unjust supposition, that the people were averse from paying taxes. Formerly the people were averse to taxation; but since the mode of taxation by loans had been introduced, they were more indifferent upon the subject. With respect to this plan of taxation, he approved of it highly. He thought the system of raising the supplies of the year within the year, was extremely proper, and therefore he should support the proposition. He thought the chancellor of the exchequer entitled to the approbation of the House, not only for the general plan, but for the modifications he had suggested. But he was afraid, notwithstanding every modification that could be suggested, that there would be still considerable inequality. But though some inconveniences might result from this plan, still he did not from thence

mean to argue that the plan ought to be rejected. Amendments might be made in the various stages of the bill. He was inclined to carry this principle of providing the whole of the supply, farther than the chancellor of the exchequer had done; and he was sure that the burthen would be less felt by the community at large, if the plan had been formed upon a larger scale. The great difficulty that would arise from carrying the plan into execution, would be, that many persons now lived up to the full extent of their incomes; and if that was the case, how were they to find the money to pay an additional tax, to so large an amount? The law required, and very properly, that the king's taxes should be paid first; but if a man had no money, what was he to do? Could he borrow any money? Certainly not—and for a very obvious reason. Government gave such exorbitant interest, that an individual could not possibly expect any body to lend him money at 5 per cent. So that after all, the modifications that had been proposed, might be very serious indeed. Suppose, instead of raising seven millions in the manner proposed, the right hon. gentleman had proposed to raise 19 or even 21 millions in the year, he was convinced it would be felt lighter by the country than raising the seven millions. In the first place, if the whole sum had been raised within the year, government would not have had occasion to borrow any money; and if they did not borrow, then individuals might. A man who wanted money, might borrow it at 5 per cent.; but in the present case, as government were going to have a loan, nobody would lend his money to an individual for 5 per cent. when he could get so much more by lending it to government. He was aware that this idea of his raising 21 millions in the year might appear rather extravagant; but he had considered it minutely, and was convinced of its practicability. It appeared to him to be a great and noble plan, and one that would enable the country to carry on the war for many years to come. This was a new idea, and might, at first view, appear objectionable; but he was convinced that it might easily be carried into effect. He was willing to draw out his plan in detail, and would give both his time and attendance in order to bring it to perfection, without requiring any reward for his trouble, except the pleasure he should derive from the consciousness of serving his country.—

But there were some other points which would naturally occur to those who considered this subject. It would be asked, and with propriety, what security the public had, that, after advancing so large a sum, it would be better disposed than that which they had already given? The right hon. gentleman had stated, on a former night, that great reductions had been made in the expenditure of the country, without making any diminution in its force. The right hon. gentleman had estimated this saving at no less than six millions. Would not the people very naturally ask, why these six millions had not been saved before, if it could have been done without reducing the force of the country too much? For his part, he was perfectly convinced that we should not have a man less employed. This proved, that the public gave their money too readily, and too liberally.—He was aware, that at this juncture the people of England must come forward with energy; but he was convinced we could not crush the enemy by carrying on a defensive war, and therefore he was for more decisive measures. The tone which the enemy had taken up lately, was enough to animate every man. He should not consider the question now as a question of the conquest of an island or a fort: for the language the enemy had used to us was such as to make every Englishman willing to risk his all to continue the contest.

Earl *Temple* gave his entire assent to the measure proposed, although he could not but lament that the plan was not more extensive. He was perfectly aware of the stake he had in the present contest, and felt, as he hoped every man in the country felt, willing to give up a part to preserve the remainder.

Sir *R. Mackreth* disapproved of the plan, and submitted one which he wished to be substituted in its place. York and Middlesex were the only counties in which property was registered. This regulation should be extended to all the other counties; for it was well known that all the lands in the kingdom were mortgaged for two-thirds of their value. He would therefore propose a tax on mortgages as one that was equitable, and would prove very productive. An equal land tax should also be adopted, and he would abolish all others. The forests and mortmain lands should be sold, and the produce thrown into the sinking fund, for the purpose of discharging the national debt. This plan

would destroy the corrupt influence of the crown, and was one which the present state of the country absolutely required.

Mr. *Nicholls* objected to the measure. It did not appear to him just, necessary, or expedient. If it was to be considered as a tax upon luxury, it was not just, because it was not optional; in all such cases government says, "if you choose the luxury, you must pay for it;" the individual should be left to choice, but here the power of choice was excluded. As a tax upon expenditure it was also unjust, because expenditure was not in proportion to property. The right hon. gentleman said, that it would be expedient to lighten our unfunded debt, and to raise the supplies within the year. This declaration comes with a bad grace from one who had, during his administration, increased our national debt 185,000,000*l*. The tax was not expedient; for it could not be expedient to crush the middle orders of the people. He professed his intention to spare the lower orders, but the fact was otherwise, all were equally oppressed, but with this difference in the operation, the higher orders of the middle class were crushed directly, the lower indirectly. Take the case of a coach-maker; at present the artisans in that branch of business were not employed three days in the week; but if the present tax was adopted they would have no employment at all. Though the minister affected to spare the lower orders it was plain that they were indirectly subject to the operation of the tax. Farther, the tax was neither just nor necessary. It was not necessary because the war was not necessary. Until ministers disavowed the opinions they had expressed at the beginning of the war, he never would believe them sincere in their endeavours for its discontinuance. His reason was this; some of them coincided in opinion with the late Mr. Burke: and his opinion was, that the representative government of France should be alienated; for, if not French principles might be propagated here, and the Commons might assume a power they did not possess before. Now, what was the system the Commons of England might wish to overturn? Here Mr. *Nicholls* read the following extract from p. 71 of Mr. Burke's charges against Mr. Fox, article 42d, viz. "This charge the party of Mr. Fox maintained article by article, beginning with the first, namely, the interference of peers at elections, and their nominating in effect

several of the members of the House of Commons. In the printed list of grievances which they made out on the occasion and in support of their charge, is found the borough for which, under lord Fitzwilliam's influence I now sit. By this remonstrance and its object, they hope to defeat the operation of property in elections, and in reality to dissolve the connexion and communication of interests which makes the Houses of Parliament a mutual support to each other. Mr. Fox and the friends of the people are not so ignorant as not to know that peers do not interfere in elections as peers, but as men of property.—They well know that the House of Lords is by itself the feeblest part of the constitution; they know that the House of Lords is supported only by its connexions with the crown and with the House of Commons, and that without this double connexion, the Lords could not exist a single year. They know, that all these parts of our constitution, whilst they are balanced as opposing interests are also connected as friends; otherwise nothing but confusion could be the result of a complex constitution. It is natural, therefore, that they who wish the common destruction of the whole, and of all its parts, should contend for their total separation. But as the House of Commons is that link which connects both the other parts of the constitution (the Crown and the Lords) with the mass of the people, it is to that link (as it is natural enough) that their incessant attacks are directed. That artificial representation of the people being once discredited and overturned all goes to pieces, and nothing but a plain French democracy, or arbitrary monarchy can possibly exist." In this article Mr. Burke clearly admitted, that in September 1793, he sat in this House under the nomination of earl Fitzwilliam; and from that same petition and article it farther appeared, that more than 150 members owed their seats to the nomination of peers. Mr. N. then went on to state, that lords interfered in elections as owners of property, though it was declared an high breach of the privileges of this House for a peer to interfere at elections.

Earl Temple called to order. He could not see what the interest of lord Fitzwilliam had to do with the question under discussion.

Mr. Tierney said, that Mr. Nicholls was defending the standing order of that

House, forbidding peers to interfere in elections.

Mr. Nicholls said, he was called to order unjustly. He spoke against peers interfering in elections, and ever would. Did not Edmund Burke sit in that House nominated by lord Fitzwilliam? Was not that a violation of the constitution.

Mr. Pitt said, that the question before the committee was not whether an attack should be made upon a peer for an alleged breach of privilege, but whether a debate upon the mode of raising a supply was the proper time for bringing forward such a subject.

Mr. Nicholls persisted in delivering it as his opinion, that the continuance of the war was not necessary, because ministers had evinced no sincere desire for peace. He should vote decidedly against the tax. He did not think it necessary. He did not think the war necessary. Remove those great proprietors of boroughs, and peace may be obtained. Dismiss the present ministers, and the war may be terminated. There were known to be peers confederated in sentiments with Mr. Burke. They were the proprietors of boroughs, which they would not abandon, unless they were forced to do so by the Commons of England. The very spirit of the tax was unjust. If the continuance of the war was so indispensable, let the minister come forward with a tax upon landed property.

Mr. Windham (secretary at war) said, that among many other assertions, the hon. member had declared it to be his opinion, that the war, neither in its beginning, nor in its continuance, was necessary. However extravagant such an assertion might appear at any time, it must undoubtedly appear peculiarly so at the present moment. The hon. gentleman next directed his attack, against those who had, at the beginning of the French revolution, expressed their disapprobation of the principles upon which it was grounded, and of the objects which it had evidently in contemplation; and he now called on those who held those opinions to renounce them as obstacles to the restoration of peace. And at what moment was it that he wished them to renounce their opinions? Was it not at the very moment when those opinions were supported by a long train of facts, and confirmed by every day's experience? Was it not at a moment when the French system was working the ruin of their own country, and all the other coun-

tries, that permitted themselves to be dazzled by its false allurements? Our ruin as a nation, and the destruction of our constitution were the main objects to which they now directed the whole of their exertions; it was the last great labour which remained for their valour and ambition to achieve. Viewing in this light the designs of the enemy, how could he be precipitate in his endeavours for peace; how could he think of relaxing our efforts? Would not the peace which was so anxiously looked for, be replete with danger to the country; and did not the hon. gentleman give still farther proof of this danger by telling us that this peace would be followed up by a parliamentary reform, or in other words, with a revolution? Were we to set at nought all the principles of religion, of morality, of prudence, and of policy, that had hitherto been a bond of union, between the states of Europe, and which had moulded them together into one family? And for what were all these to be sacrificed? Was it not in order to conciliate the enemy, to promote the cause of parliamentary reform and to introduce amongst us universal philanthropy and French liberty? He hoped there was no man in that House or out of it, who was prepared for such a degradation.

Mr. *Plumer* believed that money must be raised in some way, but he did not think the mode proposed to be the best. It was unjust in its principle. If the tax to be raised was upon luxuries, an opportunity ought to be afforded to persons to retrench those luxuries. He had heard it insinuated that no man could talk of peace with France and a reform in parliament without wishing for a revolution. Now, he certainly wished for peace on fair and honourable terms: and when peace had been obtained, he wished for a reform in the representation of the people, without which he did not think the country could be saved.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—The chancellor of the exchequer has, Sir, assigned two motives for adopting this novel, and, for a century at least, unprecedented scheme of finance. He asserts, that raising the supplies within the year will convince the enemy of our energy, and will strike terror into their hearts by shewing them, that our resources are every way adequate to the crisis. He adds at the same time, that in adopting this mode, he is influenced by a regard for posterity. As to

the impression to be made upon the enemy, I think the effect will be the very reverse of that which is desired. The French must naturally conclude, that the fear of depressing our funds still lower; is the cause of this deviation from the usual mode of borrowing. The measure itself, by whatever name it may be called, is no other than an absolute requisition of the tenth of every man's annual income. It is founded upon a past assessment; it leaves no option, but compels persons to pay for what they would wish to lay aside, and would never have adopted, if they could have foreseen so severe a contribution. My next objection to this measure is, that it will fall unequally. Large capitalists, who live upon a little, will pay but a trifle; while the man who lives in a style equal to his rank in life, will be liable to a large quota. Indeed, the right hon. gentleman seems to have anticipated this objection, for he declared the other night, that he should wish to make the avaricious capitalist pay his proportion, but that he had not found in any treatise of political economy, any mode by which property so held in hand could be made subject to taxation or assessment. But, Sir, if the right hon. gentleman does not scruple to make use of a declaration as to the extent of a man's income, why should he be so scrupulous in having recourse to a declaration as to the extent of his capital? As well might he rely upon the declaration in the one case, as in the other; and what difference is there between a compulsory disclosure of the actual amount of a person's whole property, and a required statement of income, which leads to the knowledge of capital? As to the idea that capitalists, inspired by genuine patriotism, will voluntarily come forward to the relief of the state, that man who can seriously entertain it, must be strangely ignorant of the nature of the human mind, and the force of a ruling passion. The inequality of this tax, is also discernible in its operation upon the different classes. Those in the middling walks of life will pay a full tenth of their income, while those in the highest will not pay a fifteenth, a twentieth, or even a twenty-fifth. The largest sum which is paid, at present, by any individual for assessed taxes, is 450*l.* If 450*l.* be the highest sum paid for the present assessed taxes, and the highest advance required be a quadruple, then those who have a

yearly income of 20,000*l.* and so on to 50,000*l.*, cannot pay any thing like a tenth. This measure will also fall unequally upon different trades. Many persons carry on trades in large buildings with less profits than those who carry it on in small counting-houses; the former must contribute a larger proportion than the latter. In a word, I fear that this tax will ruin almost all the trade of the country. A spirit of economy will pervade all ranks. Optional conveniences and luxuries will not only be avoided, but the scale of necessities will be as contracted as possible. If persons deal but little, or not at all, in the commodities to which they have before been accustomed, the tradesman will find his profits diminished, and must soon, perhaps, shut up his doors. It has been said, that this tax will not affect the poor. I know it is the object of the right hon. gentleman's plan to exclude the indigent from its operation: he may shelter them from the immediate, but he cannot from its remote, effects. This tax will prevent the diffusion of that philanthropy for which the nation is so justly distinguished. Persons will no longer have a superfluity, which may enable them to relieve their distressed brethren; they must look only to provide a sufficiency for the tax-gatherer. A selfish will succeed to that generous and compassionate disposition which has hitherto marked us as Britons. The tax upon wine has occasioned many of those who were in the habit of assisting the poor with wine, to discontinue the practice of affording them that help under sickness. If a tax, therefore, when laid to pay the interest of a loan, produced this evil effect, the mischief must be greater, when it is designed for the discharge both of principal and interest. But, in mitigation of these distressing consequences, we are desired to remember, that this high advance upon the assessed taxes, is no more than a temporary sacrifice: but should I grant that it will expire at the period proposed, I deny that it is only a *pro tempore* loss. If I pay 60*l.*, or 100*l.*, or 200*l.*, or a still larger sum than I now pay for assessed taxes, might not that amount have been rendered a permanent productive capital for the advantage of myself and family? Hitherto, I have considered this tax, as far as it affects individuals. I shall now endeavour to show the manner in which it will operate upon the public revenue.

A spirit of parsimony will take place. Some goods will no longer be purchased, others but sparingly; and as most goods are taxed to the support of government, the old taxes may decrease in produce, to a greater amount than the sum intended to be raised by the new. But if this additional assessment should answer the expectation of the right hon. gentleman, it can be made productive but once. Persons having felt the smarting consequences of a retrospective assessment, will avoid every expense which renders them liable to assessed taxes, lest, at the end of fifteen months after the expiration of the year 1798, they should again be served as now, and a second time be duped. In representing the consequences of this tax, I have proceeded upon the supposition that it cannot be evaded. But what will be the effect of the allowed declaration? I cannot better describe it than by calling to the recollection of the committee, what passed during the late revolutionary proceedings in Holland. A loan of the fifth part of the property of the country was required by the government, and an interest of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent was to be paid. As landed and public securities produced but $2\frac{1}{2}$, the Dutch gave a fair and honest testimony of the amount of their fortunes; but when they were afterwards called upon to advance a tenth part, and principally with a view to pay the interest of the first exaction, they moulded their consciences to the circumstances, and a great deal of perjury was practised; for it was found that a tenth part, which ought to have produced half as much as a fifth, did not produce one quarter so much. Such are the inseparable consequences of all forced contributions, accompanied with declarations, giving a claim to exemption or abatement. They introduce a great deal of falsehood and immorality into a country, and but very little money into the public coffers. If this reasoning be just, the right hon. gentleman must desist from congratulating the nation, that the expense of collecting will be inconsiderable, because no new officers will be wanting. Innumerable persons must be appointed to receive the declarations of those who will be ready to affirm that the demand is the tenth of their annual income. To conclude, Sir, I will frankly own, that if I could think more favourably of the minister's financial schemes, I should with great reluctance, confide to him the ex-

penditure of the public money. The ministers have, in the speech they put into the mouth of their sovereign, recommended to this House to persevere in the same principles and conduct which have hitherto been pursued. To this eulogy which they have bestowed upon themselves, I can by no means assent. They are the authors of all our calamities. By intermeddling in the interior concerns of other states, they have plunged this country unnecessarily and wantonly into a ruinous and expensive war, which they have been unable to conduct with success, and which they often might have terminated with honour and advantage—they have attempted to bully foreign nations into a compliance with their demand to make common cause with us against France; but, upon the least show of resistance, have withdrawn their ineffectual menace—they have borrowed upon the most exorbitant terms, and spent with the greatest profusion; so that a vast addition is made to our public debt, and an immense load of taxes thrown upon the people—they have subsidized many of the European courts, in order to enable faithless potentates to fight their own battles, and defend their own territories; and have sent money out of the country without the consent, and even during the sitting, of parliament—they have introduced a system of espionage, of setting man against man, and brother against brother—they have invaded the just liberty of speech, and of the press—and have cut off from the lower classes their only source of political information. Can you wonder, Sir, that, feeling these sentiments so strongly as I do, I should be unwilling to trust the public purse in the hands of the present administration? After the observations which I have made, it is almost needless to add, that I shall give my hearty negative to the proposed resolutions.

Mr. *Pierrepoint* said, that some part of the public burthens should be borne by the royal family and their dependents. If they would come forward it would have a good effect. Though the sum could not be much, it would endear them to their country.

Colonel *Wood* wondered to hear any difference of opinion, relative to the necessity of great and extraordinary supplies, after the present government of France had not only declared their intentions to subvert the liberties and destroy the con-

stitution and government of this country, but held out the plunder of its inhabitants as an excitement to their soldiery to embark in their mad and frantic expeditions. He proposed that no person, whose property, whether in lands, bonds, funds, goods, or whatever else, was under 5,000*l.* should be called on for any further public contribution than the present taxes and assessments, but that every person, whose property exceeded (or, we presume amounted to,) that sum, should be required to contribute a certain proportion of this property, whether a half per cent or one per cent as might be adequate to the services of the state, in lieu of all taxes and assessments whatever. He calculated the whole property of this kingdom at two thousand millions; a very small per centage on as much of which as was divided among proprietors of 5,000*l.* would soon relieve this country from all her embarrassments.

Mr. *Tierney*, after attacking Mr. Pitt for deserting, and Mr. Windham for persevering in hostility to all principles of political or parliamentary reform, and charging the former with many errors and blunders in matters of taxation and finance, said, that with all our professed hatred to French principles, our ministers were following the French system. A noble lord who spoke in this debate, had said in as many words "Let us attack the capitalists." The words were scarcely out of his mouth when another hon. member proposed the sale of the crown and forest lands. This was really proceeding upon French principles: for it was saying to the people of this country, that government would have, at all events, one tenth of the property of every man in the kingdom. He saw no reason why it might not be followed up with a demand of one-eighth, then a sixth, afterwards a half, perhaps, and finally the whole. The principle certainly led to that. Before he consented to take money out of the pockets of the English people, he ought to be well assured that it would be fairly applied for their interests by a good English administration. Above all, he ought to be well assured, that those in the highest stations were ready to set to the lowest a patriotic example. Instead of this, he saw, every man who possessed place, pension, or sinecure emolument, carving, not for the public interest, but his own. Impressed with these sentiments, he must give the propositions a decided negative.

The *Speaker* said, he was confident that many persons of affluent fortunes, sensible of the regard and delicacy which were manifested in not searching too minutely into capital, would come voluntarily forward to make such a contribution above the amount of the class of their assessment as should be equal to their real property. A clause, giving such persons such an opportunity, might be introduced into the bill.

The Committee then divided on the first resolution: Ayes, 214; Noes, 15. The other resolutions were then agreed to.

Debate on Mr. Nicholls's Motion for a Tax on Placemen.] Dec. 8. Mr. Nicholls rose and said:—In pursuance of notice, I rise to move a resolution for applying certain parts of the emoluments of certain offices to the public service during the war. In the motion I have to submit, I follow a precedent. It is a measure that was adopted in the reign of William and Mary. I have no animosity to placemen and pensioners; many of them may render great service to their country. I wish not to take any thing away from particular offices which I shall hereafter mention. It was said on a former night, that there was no difference between the emoluments of an office and the estate of a private gentleman, that the one was as much property as the other. I shall not enter on the discussion of that subject now. There are two sorts of places: one dependent on the pleasure of the crown; the other independent of it. As to offices that are dependent on the pleasure of the crown, they may be said to be fairly enjoyed because they are supposed to be dependent on the talents of the person who enjoys them; but in time of public emergency, they may be as fairly diminished as the income of any other person is diminished by taxes. The public have a right to say to a person holding a place, "True it is that your salary was such as we wished you to possess when we ourselves were affluent, but now circumstance are so altered that really we cannot now afford it." As to offices in which the grantee has a freehold interest, it is observable, that in the time of William and Mary there was no difference made between them and those that were held at the pleasure of the crown. I think there ought to be a distinction: and therefore the resolution which I shall submit will refer only to those offices which are held at the pleasure of the crown.

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Another difference which I intend to make, is, in the sum on which the resolution should attach. Instead of 500*l.*, I shall propose 2,000*l.* With these variations the resolution will be in every other respect the same as that which passed the House of Commons in the time of William and Mary *nemine contradicente*; and the reason which was then alleged for it was, that owing to the great expenses of the war, it was necessary to the public service. If it was necessary then, I presume it will hardly be disputed it is necessary now. I do not consider this as any great public resource for carrying on the war, although in that respect it is not inconsiderable; but if I succeed in this, I intend to follow it up with others respecting pensions and the application of the civil list. I think there are many men about the chancellor of the exchequer whose views ought to be changed; and who should be placed in a situation, in which they shall be interested in terminating the war. The right hon. gentleman sees about him a number of contractors, and money monopolists, who are all of them, interested in the continuance of this war. It is upon this principle, more than as a resource of revenue, that I bring forward this subject.—He concluded with moving, "That it is the opinion of this committee that the Salaries, Fees, and Perquisites, of all the Offices under the Crown shall be applied to the use of the war, except such as amount to 2,000*l.*, per annum, which are to be allowed to all officers whose Salaries, Fees, and Perquisites, at present exceed 2,000*l.* per annum. And also except that of the Lord Chancellor, and Speaker of the House of Commons, the Judges, Foreign Ministers, and the commissioned officers of His Majesty's Fleet and Armies, or any persons who have a freehold interest in their respective offices."

Mr. Pitt said:—Before I proceed to trouble the committee with such observations as occur to me on the resolution proposed by the hon. gentleman, and on the principles he has laid down in his speech, it may perhaps be not altogether foreign to the purpose, to suggest to him the probability that the resolution, if it means any thing at all, does not exactly mean what the hon. gentleman intended. As I understand it, it amounts simply to this, that all salaries of office, but those of 2,000*l.* a year value, with the exception of the lord chancellor, the Speaker of the

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House of Commons, the judges, and some others, shall be applied to the use of the war. If I comprehend it right, what does it import but that all salaries from 2,000*l.* upwards are to be reduced to 2,000*l.*; and all from 2,000*l.* downwards, are to be entirely taken away?

Mr. *Nicholls* said, that the resolution was misunderstood by the chancellor of the exchequer, and that the wording did not justify the right hon. gentleman's interpretation of it.

A general cry of "read, read!" The clerk then read the resolution, which produced a general laugh.

Mr. *Nicholls* said, he certainly did not mean that the resolution should extend to salaries under 2,000*l.* a year.

Mr. *Pitt* said:—As the hon. gentleman confines himself to those who possess salaries of more than 2,000*l.* a year, I will state shortly to the committee my reasons for thinking that idea no less absurd than the other. The hon. gentleman proposes the tax as a resource for the expenses of the war, and has taken with one comprehensive sweep of his compass, all offices from 2,000*l.* a year up to 9,000*l.* without any scale of gradation. But while he comes forward with this as a resource, why does he not state to the committee what he would expect to draw from it? Has he considered how much these offices above 2,000*l.* year may amount to in the gross? Let us consider, upon the broad basis of principle and sound policy, the scale of contribution proposed by the hon. gentleman. Will it be said that there are no qualifying circumstances which keep pace with the various gradations of salary, and render the higher proportionate to those below? Will it be contended that there is no distinction in situation between those who have salaries of 2,000*l.* a year, and those who have twice as much? Is there no difference in the importance of the trust, in the labour, in the talents, in the qualifications, in the responsibility, and in the class of life in which they stand? Is there no allowance to be made for such circumstances? Will the hon. gentleman, in the fullness of his equitable economy, say, that the same gradation ought not to be observed in taxing office, as in taxing property? And if not how will he be able to account for dealing out such unequal measure as he has attempted in these two cases? Inveighing against the disproportion of the assessed taxes to the property of the several classes taxed, and yet

holding forth a plan of indiscriminate taxation, sweeping down all to a level exacting from an office of 2,500 a year, one-fifth; from an office of 4,000*l.*, one half; from one of 6,000*l.*, two thirds.—Sir, according to my notion of the nature of taxation, this is a principle which cannot be for a moment supported. But the principle on which I chiefly rest my objection to the taxing of office, is this: that official income is less than any other species of income, given for the private enjoyment or personal gratification of those who possess it. To those who view them abstractedly, the situation of persons high in office appears splendid, and envy and malignity attribute to them an excess of private gratification they never experience, and of personal repose which they never enjoy. The situation of a younger brother, whose public station confers upon him the means, and induces the necessity of maintaining an appearance equal to those of large hereditary rank and property, is looked up to with stupid malevolence; and viewed with an eye of envious exaggeration; but any one who looks to their situation with impartial views, and attentively examines how much of their incomes is applied to personal gratification, will find that, in this respect, they are much below the general class of opulent society; that the far greater part of their expenditure is a tribute to the station they fill, and to that appearance which it is necessary for them to assume, in order to maintain an equality with those whom hereditary wealth have elevated to the highest ranks in the community. If in a free country like this, the persons who fill the offices of the highest trust and responsibility were to be selected as objects of taxation, it would indeed be extraordinary. But if it were so, and in the evil spirit of such a principle, they were to be divested of their incomes, and with it exempted from the necessity of preserving the splendor of their appearance, what would they lose? Nothing intrinsically gratifying; no, not one hour's personal enjoyment out of the four and twenty would be abridged by such a defalcation; but how far they ought to be taxed, as a political question, is a subject worth consideration. Before any class or species of income can with justice, or policy or prudence be selected for taxation, the person who proposes to select them ought to be able to show either that they are already

too lightly taxed, or that they are, from their distinct circumstances objects peculiarly fitted for great and extraordinary burthens. In laying the taxes for the supplies of the present year, the criterion that has been chosen is the former assessed taxes, liable to certain exceptions, modifications, and deductions; and this criterion has been selected as the best possible mode of apportioning the tax to tangible property of every denomination. Now, Sir, I should be glad to hear what regulation in that tax goes to exclude the property of persons in office from assessment. Is the income of gentlemen in office less tangible than that of other persons? Is a smaller portion of their income than of the income of gentlemen whose opulence is not the fruit of their own labour, but is protected and secured to them by law as the fruits of their progenitors industry, spent in objects of taxation? Nay, do they not spend much more? And shall it be said, that while in the form of that great expenditure necessarily attached to their station, they pay more of the ordinary taxes in proportion, than any other class in society, they shall be studiously marked out as objects of oppressive taxation in another way? Is there any reason why a man labouring for his income shall be more taxed than the man who possesses an independent landed property? Or rather, as, on the contrary, such an income is much less durable, subject to larger compulsory expenditure, and attended with a heavy duty, should not the distinction, if any there were, be in his favour? In every tax upon consumption, in every sumptuary tax, the man in office contributes at least as much as any other in the state, and I believe it can hardly be maintained that he ought to contribute more.—The only argument that seems to impress the hon. gentleman as being of real weight in favour of his motion is, that it will interest ministers in making peace, and although he has this night lowered his tone, and assumed a milder mode of expression, he at first did certainly mention the tax as a threat; for he said, that if I persisted in my plan of assessed taxes, he would persist in bringing forward this proposition. It was evidently, then, a menace; for if he had any true reason to offer for taxing salaries of office, why should his bringing it forward depend upon my refraining from bringing forward my taxes? But now that menace is laid aside, and it is taken

up as a punishment on ministers for past errors, or a correction for future ones. But is this the principle of the boastful patriot, the reformer? Is this the extent of his purity, to avow that he brings forward a measure, not on the broad bottom of its own merit, but with a view to give ministers so great an interest in the attainment of peace, as would induce them, without consideration of the means or the consequences, and without regard to their public duty, but merely for their own private purposes, to obtain a peace? If the war has been commenced in error, prosecuted with feebleness, and continued in corrupt obstinacy, do not adopt a bad measure to punish the authors of it, or to correct their future conduct, but address the king to remove them from his councils. Do not make the private interest of ministers a temptation to them to be guilty of a violation of their public faith and a breach of their duty, and from sordid, corrupt, and undue motives, to sacrifice the dearest interests of their country.

Mr. *Curwen* said, that in the present situation of the country every man was called upon to make sacrifices, and the struggle we had to maintain could alone be supported by economy in our expenditure. He was not disposed, however, to support the motion in its present shape; but if the right hon. gentleman would come forward with some such proposition, though the sum which would come in aid of the public service might be small, the feeling which it would inspire in the country would be of the utmost importance.

Mr. *Windham* (secretary at war) said, that though the extravagance and absurdity of the motion had already been so successfully exposed, he could not help making a few remarks upon some of the positions that had been laid down. The hon. gentleman tells us that his object is not to raise revenue: that his motion is intended for other purposes. What, then, were those purposes? Why, the hon. gentleman is desirous of peace, and he therefore proposes to subject ministers to a fine, while the war continues! This was a whimsical idea sure enough, especially when it was considered, that the sentiments of the House and of the country had already been expressed upon the subject, and when it was manifest that peace at present could not be obtained. The hon. gentleman, knowing the sentiments the House, seemed desirous to entrap

them into a measure contrary to their sentiments, to draw them into a concurrence with that wish for peace which he felt, even contrary to their judgment. It was something like the mode recommended to little boys to catch birds by throwing salt upon their tails—to do that which was in fact no longer wanted. The hon. gentleman, knowing that he could not catch the House any other way, was anxious to puzzle and perplex them, and draw them by throwing salt upon their tails, to do that which would be equally inconsistent with their sentiments, and with his own. But then came the hon. gentleman's great question of general policy. As the hon. gentleman, however, was an advocate for the new principles of government, and a zealous partisan of reform, it really might have been expected that his great scheme of policy would have been a little more dignified in design, and somewhat more unexceptionable in point of morality. To ensure purity by giving men a corrupt interest, was, in truth, a very whimsical idea for a reformer; and to give judges a bias in favour of one side, was indeed a strange way of procuring an impartial decision! Such a plan was neither wise in point of policy, nor great in conception. Did the hon. gentleman really think that a few hundred pounds to men, who if so corrupt as they were represented, had so many temptations to withstand, and such means of making up for what might thus be taken from them, could be an object to influence their conduct against their judgment? By what scale the hon. gentleman judged he could not comprehend, when he imagined that those men whose power was described as equal to involve whole nations in war, and to prolong it at their pleasure, were to be induced to change their system for the consideration of a few hundred pounds. But the rulers of states were to have an interest in preserving peace! This desire of peace, if it could be made universal among the rulers of states, might, perhaps, be of some advantage in preserving general tranquillity; but if not, to make it the particular interest of the rulers of a particular state to cultivate peace, might ultimately subject that state to the most unjust claims, to unprovoked aggressions, and to the most partial injustice. Till the hon. gentleman could make the mild, pacific, just, and conciliatory spirit of the French republic universal, he feared we must go on as we had

done before. Men might differ, no doubt, in their judgment as to the necessity of war; but as to the general proposition, it could scarcely be doubted, that the evils of war might, in the comparison, be less than the evils of not going to war. There were, then, such things as just and necessary wars. Nay, the hon. gentleman himself must assent to the general proposition; for he was, no doubt, convinced, that such was the nature of the war which France now waged against this country. The evils of war might, then, be less than the evils of not going to war, and therefore might be necessary. Necessary they might not be in that sense that nations might be compelled to go to war. Thus, for instance, (what the hon. gentleman probably would recommend) an ambassador might be forced into France, and peace procured, by an unconditional submission to every thing which the enemy might exact. He hoped, however, that the country would not be up, or rather down, to such a proceeding. It being evident, then, that we could not be sure that war would not be necessary, it certainly would be unwise to make it the interest of rulers not to go to war, whatever might be the necessity on which they were placed. He did not know even, that the greatest danger was, that the rulers of a country would be prone to war. The evils of war were more obvious, more present, more alarming to the imagination than the evils that might arise from not going to war. The latter required more consideration, more reflection, a greater regard for the interest of posterity, because they were more distant. He did not see, therefore, why there should be such danger of rulers being more inclined to war than peace. As a general proposition, then, nothing could be worse founded than the motion of the hon. gentleman. Indeed, he wondered how so weak a measure could come from a person of the hon. gentleman's gravity and knowledge. Surely the hon. gentleman had unknowingly received a fee which had biassed his understanding; surely, he had allowed his zeal for peace to mislead his judgment, and had therefore reversed the general rule in order to make it apply to this particular case.—An hon. gentleman had said, that though such a measure as that proposed might be little to the revenue, it would be of infinite advantage by the feeling which it would inspire in the country. The hon. gentleman confesses

that the measure would not remove any of the burthens which the people feel; consequently, in this respect, it would be a complete delusion. What, then, would be its effect? The people would not thank the hon. gentleman for such a measure. If it is meant that they would be glad to see others pay because they pay themselves, this was a feeling which ought not to be gratified. By such paltry acts as these it was sometimes attempted to inflame, sometimes to cajole, the people. Any feeling by such means he was not willing to excite. He utterly disclaimed all share in practising such artifices and delusions.—Something was said about the difference between the salaries of office and incomes arising from a landed estate. Upon this point his right hon. friend had given sufficient explanation. By the language which was sometimes held upon the subject, and the allusions to the burthens which the poor and the rich respectively sustained, it seemed as if gentlemen thought the rich felt no share of the burthen, but that wars were a kind of show for their amusement. If it was to be always said the rich should support the whole burthen, it would not be those who derived income from land who would be most obnoxious to the poorer classes, and it would be much easier to persuade them upon the hypothesis that the rich should pay all, that those who had landed property ought to pay more than those who had salaries, and were supposed to perform some labour in return for it. Upon these points of general doctrine he had thought it important to say something, rather as they rose out of the motion than were necessary to the discussion of it in its present shape. The doctrines which had been urged in favour of the motion he conceived to be extremely mischievous, and therefore it was the more important that they should be examined. It had been stated rather in a particular manner, as an objection to speeches in that House, that they contained addresses to the passions. The addresses thus censured, however, were not addresses to the low passions; they were not directed to the illiterate, to those who from their situation were disqualified to decide great and important questions. They were addresses to the passions through the understanding, and were calculated to rouse indignation against that which merited indignation. Addresses which appealed to the low passions, which appealed to them without at all applying

to the understanding—addresses to the illiterate, to those who could not judge and decide upon the questions to which they related, were such as he must reprobate in the severest manner.

Mr. *Tierney* said, that gentlemen on the other side seemed rather to have availed themselves of this opportunity to indulge in invective against his hon. friend, who, by the candour of his proceeding, had so little deserved it, than to speak to the motion itself. He would ask the House, whether his hon. friend had treated the subject in such a manner as to call forth reprehension? In opening the subject he had made no appeal to the passion, and altogether had not detained the House five minutes. His hon. friend had not, perhaps, sufficiently considered the shape in which his motion was made; but his intentions were good, and the principles by which those intentions were guided well founded. To the latter, whatever ridicule he might incur, he was ready to subscribe. Those principles might be subject of merriment to gentlemen on the other side: the mirth of these gentlemen was so much in unison with the temper of the chancellor of the exchequer, that when he smiled he was not surprised that they laughed. The resolution, which with a mere error of transcription, formed the model of the present motion, had been passed in times fully as good as the present, and by a parliament—no offence to the present—fully as much enlightened. He could not see, therefore, what reason there was for the sneer which the right hon. gentleman had indulged. It certainly was the intention of his hon. friend, if the principle had been recognised, to have applied it in different gradations to particular cases. For his part, he never considered the measure in the nature of a punishment, nor would he countenance such an idea. He agreed that a liberal allowance should be made to those who discharged great public offices. He had never given a vote with greater pleasure than that which he gave the last time he had the honour of being in parliament, to increase the salary of the gentleman who so honourably filled the chair of that House. Still, however, he could not help feeling indignation when he saw the allowances of office perverted, and the emoluments of men increasing with the war: nor was his indignation lessened when he heard such things defended by the right hon. gentleman in whose office they existed. His

object was to prevent the right hon. gentleman from baiting his trap with these cheese parings, and from drawing his candle across the House to bring the rats to any side he chose. He agreed with the right hon. gentleman, that those who possessed high salaries of office would feel the burthens that were to be imposed on the country. For his own part, he could not support the motion unless it were modified. Where great abilities were placed in a high situation, and where they came into it without any other means of supporting the rank to which it belonged, great salaries should be given; but when the salary of office was a gratuity, was a hoard, and an undiminished source of gain to a person who brought a large fortune into a public situation, the case was very different. A noble lord (earl Temple) had boasted of his stake in the country, and had talked loudly for the continuance of the war. The connexions of that noble lord had certainly a very considerable stake in the continuance of the war. A noble marquis (Buckingham), not a member of the cabinet, had a very lucrative office, the profits of which rose very considerably by the war. When such was the case, he was not surprised to see the relations of those who profited so much by the war so strenuous in its support. When gentlemen argued against the motion as a strange way of compelling the cabinet to peace by taking from them a few hundred pounds, they argued against that which never was thought of. It never was imagined that the cabinet could be influenced by the loss of a few hundred pounds; but it was thought, that to take away the profits they derived from the system might have considerable weight upon many who were its supporters. Such, certainly, was the case with many. In the article of barracks, was there not an extravagant number of appointments arising out of the war for the advantage of its partisans? Was not the Transport office interested in the continuance of the war? Was not the office of War secretary interested in the continuance of the war, to which it owed its existence? Was there not something in the consideration, that with the end of the war their profits would be diminished, sufficient to warp the understanding? On these grounds he hoped his hon. friend would bring forward this subject in another shape. He could not vote for the motion as an abstract measure; but when the times were such as to call for a tenth part of the in-

come of individuals, it was the duty of the House to take care that, by the very operation of the war, the incomes of certain men should not rise to ten times more than they would be in time of peace. He did wish that the people should be convinced that those in office had a fellow feeling with them.

The motion was then withdrawn.

Debate in the Commons on the Assessed Taxes Bill.] Dec. 7. Mr. Pitt brought in a Bill "for granting to his Majesty certain additional Duties on the amount of certain Duties now charged by Assessment for a time to be limited." The Bill was read a first time.

Dec. 14. On the order of the day for the second reading of the Bill,

Mr. *Wigley* said, he would state to the House some of the objections to the bill which arose in his mind. At the opening of the session, the Speech from the throne stated, that the resources of the country were ample; yet the present measure went the length of saying, in contradiction to that speech, that the funding system was exhausted, and that the people must submit to a novel and oppressive mode of taxation. Sorry he was to find that it was the right hon. gentleman's intention obstinately to persist in a measure so impolitic and unjust.—[Mr. *Wigley* was here interrupted by a burst of applause and clapping of hands in the lobby, with a cry of "Clear the lobby," occasioned by Mr. *Fox's* passing through to the House. Every one in the gallery rose as with one impulse, and the effect seemed to communicate itself to the House.]—Mr. *Wigley* proceeded. He earnestly exhorted the House, before they pledged themselves to the principle of the bill by agreeing to its being read a second time, to call the collectors of the revenue before the House, in order to their being examined at the bar. Their report, he was sure, would induce the chancellor of the exchequer to abandon the scheme altogether.

Mr. *H. Thornton* said, he had received the unanimous instructions of his constituents to oppose the bill. Were he to speak his own sentiments, he would wish the bill to go to a committee, in order to see how far it might be rendered palatable; but his constituents in their instructions had been so earnest and unanimous, that he must give the motion a decided

negative. He believed that the men of property throughout the country were willing to come forward with liberal contributions in support of the war, if measures were taken to diffuse the tax more equally. He could not help thinking that the bill was misunderstood by the people. They considered it as a tax upon the articles which were assessed, and had therefore come to the resolution to discontinue the use of them, or, at least, to diminish the consumption. The circumstance of so many watchmakers and coachmakers being put out of employment should suggest to the minister the necessity of considering how far the tax might induce the people to leave off the use of those articles. The tax might be made productive for one year, but the next year the exemptions would be so numerous that the greater part of the tax would be done away. As he thought that there existed less exceptionable means of accomplishing the end proposed he wished the bill to be postponed. On the great fundamental principle of the bill he completely coincided with the chancellor of the exchequer; for he was convinced of the great advantage of raising a large sum within the year, and if he thought there was no other mode of accomplishing it but the one now under consideration, he would adopt it without hesitation.

Mr. *Yorke* said, that from the first moment that he had been able to think on any political subject, he had adopted the opinion laid down in an old book, that it was his duty to do every thing that could tend to "abate the pride, assuage the malice, and confound the devices of our enemies." In the true spirit of this old principle, he had supported ministers, being convinced from the outset of the contest, that the war was just, necessary, and unavoidable, and that we had nothing left for us to do with an enemy that sought our utter destruction, but to grapple and fight it out manfully. He felt as much as any man the burthens of the people, and wished to lessen them. But the present was a contest in which a lesser evil must be endured, in order to avoid a greater, and in which every man who had any property was called upon to contribute a share of it to the defence of the country. For his own part, he was willing to spend his last shilling, and shed the last drop of his blood to defend the country against the designs of France. In his opinion, the bill must pass in some shape or other, if

they hoped for national security. It was said, it would be extremely burthensome. This he would not deny; but in return would put it to the House, whether it was better to endure that burthen for the defence of their property, or wait till the French came to take it by force out of their pockets, and to annihilate their commerce, the sole source of their prosperity. As the right hon. gentleman on the other side (Mr. Fox) had been removed for some time from public life, he had had time to read the history of what had lately passed in Europe. He would be glad to hear what the right hon. gentleman had to say with respect to the design of relieving the funds. He had often heard him expatiate on that subject with pleasure; because he had always spoke in favour of that plan. He concluded with reprobating, as unconstitutional, the doctrine of members of parliament being guided by the instructions of their constituents.

Mr. *Nicholls* said, that the taxation proposed stopped short where it ought to begin, namely, at wealth and opulence, leaving the greater part of the weight upon the middling classes, who were least able to support it. It was the most unwise, unjust, impolitic, and cruel measure, that he had ever heard of, and would not only be oppressive in its operation, but ineffectual to its proposed end; it would not only crush the people, but destroy the revenue, by lessening the consumption of taxable commodities, and diminishing the quantity of productive labour and of the materials used in it. So far from relieving the funds, it would give them a fatal wound, by taking away the source from which the interest of the funds was supplied, and rendering it impossible to pay the dividends. The plan was not only inexpedient, but absolutely impracticable, and the chancellor of the exchequer knew it.

Lord *Hawkesbury* said, that when he considered that this bill affected less than 800,000 persons, and that out of that 800,000, 400,000 were but slightly affected, he would ask the House whether, if a loan were raised by the ordinary mode, and provisions made for the payment of the interest by duties on articles of consumption, the burthen would not fall three times higher upon the lower classes than they would by this bill? With respect to the higher classes, it was a question whether they did not begin too low. But

it had been said, that the lower orders, though not taxed, would suffer indirectly, through the destruction of commerce. Persons in considering this part of the question, often confounded two things totally distinct in themselves—particular trades and general commerce. It was impossible to devise any system which might not bear harder upon any one particular branch than another. The question, therefore, resolved itself simply into this—Whether commercial capital was untouched—whether general commerce was crippled or diminished, whatever might be the effect upon a particular trade?—A distinction had been taken between productive and unproductive labour; and it was a question, whether the operation of this tax might not benefit the public, by turning unproductive into productive labour? This brought him to the consideration of the principles of all taxation: taxes must bear upon either necessities or luxuries, or upon articles partaking the nature of both. The orders of men were, the poor consuming the necessities, the rich consuming the luxuries, and the middle ranks, or poorer gentry, who used the articles of the middle class. It was the policy of taxation to impose no, or but a small, burthen upon the poor; and from the articles of luxury alone consumed by the rich, there could not be sufficient collected for the purposes of revenue: it must therefore fall upon the middle classes of life; the poorer gentry must feel it; and the objection, therefore, did not apply to this measure exclusively, but to every system of taxation.—He was of opinion that the funding system was a great cause of the wealth and power of this country. It was a discovery which had been attended with the most beneficial consequences. But to preserve the benefits of that system, it must be confined within certain bounds; and this he understood to be the plan of his right hon. friend. Nothing could give a deeper wound to the prosperity of the country, or more effectually destroy individual comfort, than any disaster to the funded system. The question, therefore, was, whether we would submit to temporary inconveniences, to keep up that which had hitherto supported the power and wealth of the country? He was satisfied that to raise a considerable part of the supply for the year within the year itself was the best for the public, and eventually best for the individual.

Mr. Alderman *Lushington* felt the necessity of supporting the war with a liberal supply, but when he saw a measure of dangerous tendency brought forward, he must resist it. Throughout the war he had concurred with ministers; and had endeavoured to impress on the minds of the people the necessity of repressing the attempts of the French revolutionists to infuse their dangerous principles into the bosoms of Englishmen. The present bill was intended to make provision for that purpose, by raising a large sum in the course of the year for the purpose of lightening the funds and keeping them more clear for future emergencies. He conceived the principle of the measure just; but great caution was required in carrying it into practice, and accommodating it to the infinite variety of circumstances it might involve. The policy of the present time, suggested that the staff of the country was in the class called the lower. They were happy in the protection they found, and blessed that constitution which secured to them the comforts they enjoyed, but if those comforts were contracted they would cease to bless. He therefore hoped that such modifications would be introduced as would show the people that the tax would fall in proportion to the property of the person taxed. He was instructed to resist the principle of the bill, but he held it to be good, and was of opinion, that until the ambition of France was considerably abated, we must do every thing to check her, or fall a sacrifice to her wicked designs.

Mr. *Sheridan* said:—Sir; when any stranger, or person who has been a long time absent, first enters a house of any establishment, it is the ordinary custom for the master of the house to do the ceremonies of the place, and welcome him on his arrival with some expression of pleasure or politeness, as a mark of hospitality. In this House, I know, Sir, there can be no master; but if there were any I am sure it is not the hon. gentleman (Mr. Yorke) who has taken upon himself with such officious kindness to act that part, and to hail, with compliments so truly worthy of himself, the arrival of my right hon. friend and myself. I cannot help thanking the hon. gentleman for his politeness, though my gratitude would be of a warmer kind, if the hon. gentleman had not, under the form of predicting, taken upon him to prescribe what ought to be our conduct now that we have come.

Whether we were or were not right in absentsing ourselves, is a question, which cannot properly come before the House, but must rest with our consciences and feelings, and be canvassed only by ourselves and our constituents.—I will not now enter into a discussion of the question, whether the war was just, or necessary; for I hope to see the day, and that not a very distant one, when it will undergo full consideration. An hon. gentleman has asked whether we will carry this measure through the House, or leave the French to tear the money from our pockets? If this were the only alternative, I hope, and I most sincerely believe, there is not a man in the country, let the minister be who he may, that would hesitate to support him in the prosecution of the war with purse, hand and heart. If there be any who would refuse, in such a cause, to expend the last shilling of his property, and shed the last drop of his blood, he is not to be found among those who, from the beginning, have opposed the war, as being equally absurd and unjust. If France looks for friends and abettors here, they must look among the slaves who bow to power, and barter their principles for their private advantage, and not among the real friends of freedom.—But here, Sir, let me be indulged in a few observations respecting the sincerity of ministers in their attempts at negotiation. For my part, when I look at the heap of papers that have been laid before the House on that subject, I can discover nothing in them but a trial of diplomatic skill—a contest of dexterity, who should best succeed in avoiding the imputation of duplicity, and most speciously impose on the credulity, and frustrate the expectations of Europe. It is my opinion that both parties were equally indisposed to peace. But admitting that such was the disposition of the French government—admitting that the French Directory have behaved insultingly towards our ambassador—admitting that the whole of the French nation entertain an inveterate hostility against us, must I therefore submit to the inference, that because pacific offers have been made and rejected, ministers are to stand proudly erect, and imperiously to demand the general concurrence of all those who first had thought proper to condemn and oppose their measures? That I and my friends have frequently urged the necessity of making pacific propositions to the enemy; that we have also pledged ourselves, should the enemy persevere in an

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obstinate refusal to listen to reasonable conditions, that we would support even the present administration, I am ready to confess; but that support it was our intention to afford them only as long as we thought it possible that such ministers might yet obtain a peace. That support we were disposed to lend them while our efforts were as yet seconded by powerful allies, and before the French nation had attained their present enormous power. That pledge was given while the Bank of England was yet in credit, and while the public faith remained inviolate. But from these propositions of peace, and from these pledges of support to the present ministers we desisted last session. Circumstances compelled us to adopt a contrary conduct instead of pledging ourselves any longer to countenance the measures of ministers, an hon. friend of mine (Mr. Combe), brought forward a motion for an address to his majesty, humbly beseeching him to remove his present ministers, and representing to his majesty that under their auspices the attainment of peace was impossible; for that instead of accelerating the return, they, on the contrary stood directly in the way of peace. Yet, after this direct avowal of our total distrust of their conduct, they now come forward and tell us that we must still give them our support; that parliament is still to countenance the measures of the right hon. gentleman. Nor am I backward, Sir, also to declare, that it is not to curb the ambition of the enemy, that the war is now continued. The war is continued for the sole purpose of keeping nine worthless ministers in their places. When I profess this to be my opinion, I by no means intended any thing personally disrespectful to them. Their public conduct is all that I impeach. As long as they remain in their present sentiments there is no possibility of their obtaining peace; and they must be as sensible of this their inability as I am. Why, then, will they persevere in a mercenary preference of their own interests to those of the country, convinced as they must be that the principles they have acted on, and which they still avow, must effectually prevent them from negotiating with success, while they continue to hold out to it, that the existence of the British constitution is inconsistent with the existence of the French Republic? From this unwise declaration, what will be the conclusion which the French government must naturally draw? Why,

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that we attempt a negotiation only because we are reduced to the very last extremity, as we were prepared to make every sacrifice sooner than attempt it. As to the measure before the House, no possible modification it can receive will be able to reconcile me to it. It runs foul on all the principles on which taxes can be raised; it is a penalty on economy, a bounty on perjury, a libel on the public spirit, a commission of bankruptcy against the whole commercial part of the community. We are told it will not affect the poorer descriptions of the people. No assertion can be more unfounded. For must it not touch all those profits arising from the luxuries in which the rich indulge? Must not the retrenchments of the wealthy trench on the means of subsistence of the poor? Yes, you may tell us they are not taxed. The poor are not taxed, I allow you, but they will be starved. For they must be starved who derived their livelihood from the expenses of the great. Numberless are the objections to the principle of this bill. It goes to impose a tax on the expenditure, and not upon property. I would agree with the right hon. gentleman that property should be taxed, could he devise a criterion by which it could be accurately estimated. But surely he will not say, that carriages, horses, &c. are a perfect criterion of property. Sure I am that the ultimate operation of the bill will be to ferret out all property; but can this end be attained without the disclosure of the means of individuals? If such a system should therefore be enforced, will it not go to erect in every parish a fiscal inquisition to pry into the property of individuals, to ascertain their gains or their profits, and thus lay open and expose the improvement or decay of their circumstances? Would not such a system prove fatal to all industry, to all trade, and cut up by the roots every species of property. Look at the bill. What does it tell you? If you are over-rated, then you may appeal—and to whom? To your own neighbours and fellow-parishioners, if any description of men can be found so base as to undertake an office so degrading. But to what a trying situation must the person so appealing be exposed. If the spies of government say they doubt his word, he is then to be examined upon oath, and evidence may also be brought on oath to contradict his declaration. To what a situation, I say, is he then reduced! Either he must incur the suspicion of being a perjured man, so

strong are the temptations held out to him or, if he makes a fair avowal of his circumstances, and says his income amounts to 200*l.* without taking into account the accidental circumstances that may impair it, should it come to be impaired, and that the next year it amounts but to 150*l.*; either he must appeal, and divulge the decay of his circumstances, or he must hold up a false front to those with whom he deals, and should he fail, be accused of having upheld his credit by fraud. Upon the whole, if you follow up the principle, you must get at all actual property. To this it must ultimately go: but then it would be found a mean and narrow principle, and principally arising from narrow prejudices. If you attempt to call on the highly opulent, whose income may exceed 20,000*l.* per annum, but who spend comparatively little, how are you to ascertain the proportion they should pay? It cannot be done, and if it could the attempt would be impolitic and unjust. The right hon. gentleman has said, that he wished he could get at the hoards of the miser; that misers ought not to be permitted to press their bags under their pillows, without coming forward with their due proportion for the protection which the state gives to their treasure. If such treasures had never been actively employed, in industrious commerce, it might be proper to derive a resource from them; but who would toil for an income, if they were not permitted to spare or expend it according to their own notions? To the sacred principle of saving, I cannot but profess myself a friend, though the habits of my life have been little regulated by it; and to encroach on this sacred principle, would be to extinguish the spirit which enlivens industry, and from which all private and public wealth can alone be derived. However the right hon. gentleman may be disposed to give a variety of modifications to the bill there is no possible modification which can reconcile me to its adoption.

Mr. *Burdon* approved of the principle of the bill, which went to raise a considerable sum of money within the year. How was it possible to raise such a sum without the general body feeling a considerable pressure? Feeling, as he did, that ministers were in earnest in their late negotiation for peace, he thought himself called upon to give them his support.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, that the absence for some time past of the hon. gentlemen opposite to him was neither a

subject of praise nor dispraise with him; but it was a subject of just complaint that they should now come down to the House, and expect to bring up their arrears of debate. He had not heard one objection to the principle of the bill from the hon. gentleman. He had, therefore, little to say. But he rose to ask this plain question, What did gentlemen object to in the principle of the bill? One gentleman had said it was best to raise the sum upon income, and another upon property. But this was an argument that might be discussed in the committee. Even if the sum were to be levied on property, that might be done without any great alteration of the bill, and did not affect its principle, which was, that part of the supplies ought to be raised out of the usual course of funding. It was said that men of large estates and parsimonious habits, would not pay according to their income, but according to their expenditure. This would be true in some few cases. But what ever motives old men had to hoard money, their young heirs had usually as strong motives to squander it. Taking, therefore, the young with the old, the property of the miser might be said to pay its share of the contribution. It was said that the mode provided by the bill was not a correct way of ascertaining the actual incomes of the several classes with accuracy: The assessed taxes were taken for a criterion: it was a conjectural criterion; and a better might perhaps be found. But neither this, nor any other objection was radical, that did not resist the raising of part of the supplies out of the ordinary mode of funding. It was said, that his right hon. friend had abandoned the funding system, and yet the greater part of the supplies were to be raised by it. It was also contended, that all the money raised for public services was withdrawn from the general expenditure; but this was an erroneous proposition. The money expended for the clothing and pay of the army, or for the support of the navy, did not decrease the resources of agriculture or commerce. Trade and commerce have increased during this expensive war. It was not true that the public revenue was so much money withdrawn from the amount of the general expenditure. The main question was, the necessity of raising the money to counteract the enemy. The hon. gentleman had talked of the unworthiness of ministers. Perhaps he did not think them so unworthy as he found it

convenient to affect. He could not, however, expect him to agree with him on that point; and he thought it unwise to tell the House, that because they would not humour him in his declarations against ministers, he would abandon the interests of his constituents and of the country. If nine gentlemen, or any other number, could be found who could make a peace with France on terms calculated to preserve the established constitution of this country, to maintain its power in Europe, and the causes of its wealth and prosperity, he would be the basest creature that ever disgraced the human shape who would not cordially give place to such persons.

Mr. Fox rose and said:—I do not conceive, Sir, that the attendance or non-attendance of any particular member of this House can be a fit subject of observation. I agree with the right hon. gentleman who spoke last, that the propriety of attending this House or of absenting, is a matter that ought to rest with each individual. I have nothing to say upon that subject, farther than that the same motives which have induced me to absent myself for some time, are now as prevalent in my mind as ever. My opinion is now what it has long been, that the present administration have by the unfortunate blindness of this House, and the too easy temper of the people of this country, so impaired its finances, so increased its embarrassments, but above all, so disfigured its constitution, that no services which any individual can render by his attendance will counterbalance the mischiefs which must arise from giving countenance to an opinion, that the decisions of this House are always the result of full discussion. In that opinion I am as firm as at any time of my life. It is not the establishment of this or that regulation in a particular instance, of this or that modification of a particular measure, that can essentially serve the people. Nothing short of a total reform of our late system, nothing short of our reverting to the true principles of our constitution, to the popular maxims of our ancestors, can save us from utter ruin. Seeing that by my attendance I was unable to prevail on the House to adopt these principles, I omitted to attend. But I attend this night in consequence of what is to me at least an important sentiment—the propriety of yielding to the request of my constituents. This is not a moment to enlarge upon the duties of a member of this House, but it

appears to me that to comply with the general desire of his constituents, especially in such a case as that which is now before us, is one of those duties.

I have been told this night that I have been much imposed upon in the representations of many important public events; that I have formed erroneous conclusions from them; that I in my retirement have had leisure to re-consider my former opinions; and that I, like others, may have had much to learn. Those who think they have arrived at that degree of knowledge beyond which they have nothing to learn, are in a state which, when they affect it, show they have learnt but little. But I should hold myself much indebted to the right hon. gentleman who made this observation, if he would tell me, in what book of ancient or modern history—in what school of philosophy—in what system of any admired politician, since the creation of the world to the present hour, I am to find, that perseverance in a system which has led you to the brink of ruin is the way to extricate you from your difficulty. That, indeed, is one of the lessons which I have yet to learn. I had no hopes of gaining for the public any advantage by my attendance; but my constituents desired me to attend, and I determined to comply. I know it is popular, in this House, at least, to hold that a member of parliament is not particularly bound to obey his constituents, whose opinions may be guided by local prejudices and partial interests; that he is to consider himself as the representative of the people at large; and that he is to act as appears to him most favourable to that enlarged view of the interests of his country. I trust that I should be no more ready than others to obey the wish of a particular class of men who happen to be my constituents, if by so doing I was convinced I obeyed them to the prejudice of the whole community. But in this particular instance, I have the comfort to feel that my sentiments and those of my constituents perfectly coincide. My constituents have desired me to attend this bill, and if I thought my own opinion more important than theirs I should have endeavoured to have reasoned with them upon the futility of that attendance; but their desire controls my conduct. I am bound to state their case in this House. They think, and so do I, that by this bill all the principles of our ancestors are abandoned, and that a profligate contempt

of property (the protection of which was one of their favourite objects) is now manifest from the tenor of the bill before you.

The right hon. gentleman who spoke last, states two grounds upon which this subject may be considered. He admits, first, that every man who opposes all means of supply, except such as arise from the funding system, may fairly oppose the principle of this bill; certainly he may. Secondly, he states that those who think that taxes should not be laid upon income, but generally upon property, may also vote for the second reading of this bill, with a view of modifying it in such a manner as to answer the object which the principle of the bill is supposed to have in view, namely, a tax upon property, so as to raise a considerable part of the supplies within the year; that is to say, that any man who objects to the increase of assessed taxes, may yet vote for the second reading of this bill, as a measure, the foundation of which is to call for the contribution of property for the service of the state. I confess that argument was perfectly new to me. Where am I to look for the principle of this bill? I should think, to the resolutions on which it is founded; but I do not see one line in them that relates to the principle of the measure, which does not state the assessed taxes as their basis as well as their criterion. And yet I am told, that any man who thinks that these assessments are the worst of all possible criteria may vote for this bill, because it is that which has for its object a general taxation upon property. This I consider as the mere shuffling language to which gentlemen are driven to support the infamous system on which they endeavour to load the people of this country. The right hon. gentleman says he knows of no discontent which has been expressed against the principle of this bill, as a tax upon property; that all the objection arises from the assessed taxes being taken as a criterion whereby that property is to be guessed at. The objections which have hitherto been made by those best capable of judging, at least most sincere in examining, namely, those who are to be called upon to pay, have been made to the bill which is now before you, and it would be strange indeed if they did not object to a bill which tends to the immediate destruction of their trade, the annihilation of their fortunes, and possibly the loss of the liberty of their per-

sons. I consider their objections as pointed against the fundamental principles of the bill. Another hon. gentleman seems to think that the unpopularity of the measure is no argument against it. He seems rather to think it an argument in its favour; for he says, he believes that the people would not cry out against it unless they thought it a measure effectual for the purpose of raising a large sum of money. That hon. gentleman seems to think the objections of the public unreasonable in this particular. I understand he is connected with commerce, and I therefore appeal to him, whether he would not himself claim the privilege of complaining, at least, if a demand were made upon him for money which he felt he could not pay; and which, by the theory of our constitution, he was not bound to pay without his own consent? Such is the case of the inhabitants of the city of Westminster, and so have they instructed me to state it.

It is asked, What objection can be stated to the raising part of our supplies within the year? To that I must give, shortly, a conditional answer. If any man could show me (the possibility of which I doubt) any means of raising a large supply within the year, without a disadvantage which would overbalance it, I should be glad to comply. But here I must pause awhile, and consider the progress of the present war. We are now called upon by this measure not to burthen our posterity, but to stand the brunt in our own persons. This, under certain circumstances, might be prudent; generous it certainly would be; but I think it comes with a very ill grace from those who have contributed so much already to the burthens to be transferred to such posterity. It comes from those who have pursued a plan which tends to burthen our posterity so much, that they are afraid of pursuing it any longer; and now, most generously, when they are absolutely under the necessity of stopping, they turn round and call upon us to bear an intolerable burthen in order to support their measures. This plan proceeds from absolute necessity, not from any tenderness felt for those who are to come after us; and I cannot help thinking that its public spirit will not be much respected in the world. If there was any period (and I am now begging the question, merely for the sake of proceeding in the argument), but if there was any period in which such a measure as this

could have been well timed, it was at the commencement of the war. The chancellor of the exchequer proceeded upon something like it, as far as it can be considered as a plan to diminish future burthens, immediately after the Spanish armament. Why not produce this plan at the commencement of the war? Why; because it was necessary to delude this House; because it was necessary to delude the people of this country; because it was necessary, for the purposes which the minister had then in view, to treat us all like children. This was the reason why this plan was not at first adopted. If it had, the delusion would have been over, and the people would have seen the abyss into which the minister was disposed to lead them. No! that would not suit his purpose. The people would have revolted at a system so developed. So well aware was he of this, that in an early stage of this contest, he advised his majesty to tell his parliament it was a great consolation to him, that in the prosecution of this just and necessary war, there need not be imposed upon his people very heavy and oppressive burthens. Why did he not then come forward with the patriotic principle which he now assumes? Why! because he thought it necessary to delude you, to gain your assent to enter into the contest, by telling you the burthen would be light; and now that you are involved in all its difficulties, and when he tells you you cannot retire with honour, he comes with this impost, which would have been too abominable at the onset, but which he now means to pass in the desperation of your affairs.

Although no great friend to novel systems of finance, I am ready to say, that any thing which is new ought to be adopted, provided it appears to be wise; but I am ready to confess also, that I have never heard of a better system for raising money in times of great difficulty than that of the funding system. I conceive this to be intended as a tax on the income of each individual, as well as it can be ascertained. It must, therefore, be the wish of the minister to learn the amount of the income of each individual in the nation; this he proposes to do by examining the present assessment. If it be not a tax on income I should be glad to know what it is. Indeed, the right hon. gentleman who spoke last considers it not as a tax upon income, but a tax upon property: and calls upon all those who approve of that principle to

support it, saying, that the opposition to it proceeds from a misapprehension of its nature. Taking it, then, in the general view, as a tax upon property, I am led to examine its nature. I certainly do think, that in that view it is a tax of a very dangerous description. A tax upon property must either arise from land, from money in the funds, or from commercial gains. What would be the fair way of viewing either of these three species of property? I consider all those pursuits in life which are very justly denominated professions, under the head of commercial gains. These being the different denominations of property, let us examine the principle of this bill as it applies to each. Would you tax the land-proprietor by a direct impost? No, it is not attempted. Would you tax the property of the fundholder? No, no minister has yet been either blind or abandoned enough to attempt it. The annuities on the funds have been secured from year to year, and parliament stands pledged not to touch that property with taxation. So stands the law. But this bill will tax indirectly that which no minister has yet dared to tax in a direct manner. It has been said, that our funding system has contributed to preserve the effects of our Revolution, to preserve the interests, and keep up the spirit of this country, to enable us to thwart the ambitious views of the house of Bourbon. See whether this plan does or does not tend to the diminution of the value of that security. I am sure it is understood by my constituents, as not only likely to affect such security, but also all their commercial interests. Let us suppose, for instance, two gentlemen of equal fortune setting out in life, the one of them with his 10,000*l.* laying it out upon mortgage, and living upon the interest of his money, which would be 500*l.* per annum.; you would tax him, according to the principle of this bill, for that income, and no more; suppose the second applies his 10,000*l.* in commerce, and it produces to him 1,000*l.* per annum, you will tax him at the rate of 1,000*l.* a year. What is the reason of this difference? They are both equal in point of real property. But as you make income the basis of your taxation, you impose upon diligence, upon activity, and upon industry, double the weight which you lay upon him who chooses to repose supinely upon the produce of his capital. It is thus you propose to preserve in men that spirit by

which this country has been distinguished from other nations. Idleness is favoured, diligence discouraged. A principle so detestable, that I could not have conceived it possible to enter into the mind of any man acquainted with the springs of human action.

You call this in another view, a tax upon luxury. Is a house a luxury? In the case of a multitude of my constituents, it neither is nor can be so considered. You say that where a man contributes largely to the payment of assessed taxes, he gives evidence of wealth. What you consider as evidences of his wealth are nothing more than the implements of the trade by which he exists. There are many, especially among my constituents, whose constant custom it is to let lodgings. They are objects of the present bill. I know you may say, I dare say you will, that they shall be relieved by provisions, which are to be adopted in the committee. Let us suppose a tradesman who pays a great rent for his house, such as would induce you, by the present plan, to consider him as a man of 1,000*l.* a year income; his next door neighbour may be a private gentleman, whose real income is 2,000*l.* a year, but who by choice or accident, inhabits a house of much inferior value; he will, by this tax, have a lighter impost than the tradesman. That is only one of the subjects of complaint against this bill. With respect to those who have ready furnished houses, I understand they will be liable to the full extent of this tax, and that whether they be tradesmen or gentlemen, the one living upon a certain, the other upon an uncertain income, will make no difference; whereas it is most clear that the one lives upon a fortune, the amount of which he knows, and the other embarks the little capital he is able to collect to furnish a house, and to take the chance of subsisting upon the fruits of it. I should like to be made acquainted with the equity of a bill which confounds the distinction between these cases.

But to try the merits of this bill by another test. If you think horses, or dogs, or male servants, fair tests of opulence, in God's name how can any housekeeper in any considerable town, be fairly assessed? Is it possible to take any such criterion as the test of wealth in a populous place? I am quite surprised that the chancellor of the exchequer should have taken advice so gross as that which led him to blunder upon the present bill.

He says, "here are horses, they are to be considered as articles of luxury." They are so, generally speaking, to members of this House, to which, however, there are some exceptions. They are by no means to be considered as articles of luxury to merchants, or to traders whose businesses are extensive, for many of them necessarily employ riders in the course of their commercial dealings. There are many others to whom horses are absolutely necessary. Medical men, who are compelled to go from place to place in the course of their profession, have occasion for horses; as well as many others whose cases it is not necessary for me to mention. I say, therefore, that this bill proceeds upon a principle which, in every view of it, is vicious, as far as I have hitherto considered it. But this is not all: you are called upon to regulate your future exactions, not by the future prudence of men, which would be a fair rule of impost in certain cases; but by the most iniquitous rule that can be possibly adopted—that of the past expenditure of men. A man may have lived unprovidently and may find it wise to contract his expenses. By this bill you allow him no chance of retrieving his fortune by that prudence which is the effect of his experience. You do not allow a man the benefit which ought to be the result of a long and prudent life. Let us suppose, for instance, a man residing frugally in the country should wish to come to London for a season with his family: from the short stay he intends to make, it may not possibly be a great object with him what his expenses are. He wishes to show his wife and daughters the gaieties of the town; he conducts them to places of public amusement, and determines to retire into the country again to enjoy his rural amusement. This he might have done at any time previous to this bill, without any other expense than such as he expected. But if he take such an excursion in the year 1797, woe be to him, and to all those who are most dear to him! for he is not only to pay the expenses of that excursion, but the expenses of that excursion are to be estimated according to the assessment which is made upon him in that day of his levity, and is to be called the test by which his ability to serve the state is to be estimated.

It is said, I know, that this is only to be a temporary measure, and that it would be extravagant to consider it as an impost

for life. Upon that a word or two—by and by. I say he is settled by this with a heavy and unjust impost. This mode of calling upon men for future exertions in the service of the state, is too iniquitous to bear the test of one moment's reflection. This principle of injustice reminds me of the illustration which Sterne gives of the violent extortion of the ancient government of France. The case is exactly in point. When at Lyons, Yorick resolved to change his mode of travelling, and sail down the Rhone, instead of going post. The postmaster, however, applied to him for six livres six sous, as the price of the next post. "But I do not intend to travel post," said Yorick. "You may, if you please," replied the postmaster. "But I do not please," said Yorick:—"I mean to go by water." "That is no matter," said the postmaster:—"You must pay for the next post, whether you have changed your mind or not." And, said Mr. Fox, here the word "principle" or "spirit" was used, as they are always used, to sanctify injustice; for says, the postmaster—"The spirit of the impost is, that the grand monarque shall not suffer by your fickleness." Charged he was, and obliged to pay. So it is with the present tax: for all the people who have paid assessments in this country are called upon for great and additional assessments, which they must pay, or which must rather be wrested from them by distraining upon their goods, not upon a computation of their future ability, nor in prospect of their future views, but in consequence of their former expenditure, whether wisely or imprudently occasioned. By this plan it is in vain that a man's prudence is called in to regulate his circumstances. Let us consider this as applicable to persons in trade, distinguished from those who possess permanent and specific incomes. A man in trade may say, that the last year was a good one, and therefore, he kept his one horse-chaise, but whether he should continue it, must depend upon circumstances; that he governed his expenditure, prudently, by the fluctuation of his circumstances, and therefore if his trade was worse this year than it was the last, he would set aside his one-horse chaise and many other conveniences. But, by the principle of this bill, you do not allow him to do so, and you add insult to injury, by telling him that you will call upon him to support the exigencies of the state according to his establishment, as it

appears by a former assessment, and that he shall pay hereafter triple what he formerly did; and this you intend as a complement to his growing wealth as a tradesman. But, it seems, there is to be some relief in this bill to those who are over-rated. They are to have abatements in proportion, as they prove they are assessed beyond their income. But how is this abatement to take place? By the disclosure of all the private affairs of a man of trade. A mode of relief which, if it deserves the name, is as intolerable as the grievance. Take any tradesman, a watchmaker for instance, he would tell you that his income, prior to the last impost upon watches, was much superior to what it is now. That must be the case with every other man in trade, especially as he does not know how he may be taxed hereafter. I am the more supported in this part of my argument, when I refer to the future prospects of the minister, for he tells us that a very considerable part of the ways and means are yet to come. How, therefore, is it possible for a tradesman, without knowing what the future subjects of taxation are to be, to guess at his future income? Under such considerations, the idea of calling upon a tradesman to guess at his future income is the most horribly unjust proceeding that ever could be devised by any minister of state.

It is stated, that this tax will necessarily fall heavy upon the middling class, because, generally speaking, they consume articles which partake of the double quality of luxuries of life and necessities. To which I must answer, that it is a great grievance to any class of men, particularly so to those whose incomes are limited to a certain amount, not to have the benefit which generally arises from a prudent diminution of expenses. It is allowing them no advantage from any economy they might be disposed to adopt, and it is exposing them, notwithstanding all disposition to economy, to utter ruin. It is not what the tradesman will have to pay to the assessment in direct contribution, but what he will have to suffer in diminished trade; for, by the attack on all classes of gentlemen, you drive them to privations which are ruinous to trade. They may economise; they may drink less wine: they may indulge less in the comforts that are habitual to them; but this evil, great as it is, is little in comparison of the mischief it will do to trade. It will, however, introduce new manners

and habits among us; and I will fairly say, that I am not for confounding the ranks of society. This is one of the evils with which this measure is pregnant. No act of the French Directory ever did so much to confound the ranks of mankind as this measure will do. It will out of the race of gentlemen, create two orders, princes and beggars. All the body of middle gentlemen will be reduced to beggary, for it is in vain to say that it is to be considered as a solitary exertion. It is announced for two years and a quarter, but who will say that it is too close there? A tenth of the income is the nominal amount of the assessment. But in this, the assessment is proportioned in name, not in substance, and there is no equality in its burthen on the people. The gentleman of 1,000*l.* a year, for instance, who has to pay 100*l.* a year, is much more severely taxed than the man of 10,000*l.* a year, who has to pay 1,000*l.* But whatever may be the hardships which it may bring on gentlemen, they are nothing in comparison of its effects on the commercial part of the community. To gentlemen it may operate to retrenchment and to the privation of indulgencies, but to the trader it is ruin. The ostentation of the best race of gentlemen may subside, and the young men may be taught more prudent habits; but this very retrenchment will be fatal to trade, and fatal also to the existing revenue. Commercial people have no refuge. They cannot retrench, for they do not now indulge. I find that men of all descriptions unite in abhorrence of the principle and tendency of this bill. They all object to the principle, because the assessed taxes are not only not a just criterion of wealth, but the worst and most fallacious that could be devised; for in every part of this metropolis, so fatal has been the disastrous war in which we are involved, that the assessed taxes are now with the greatest difficulty collected. They are either in arrears, or postponed, or the goods of the unhappy persons are distrained; and they all unite in declaring, not merely against the inexpediency, but against the total impracticability of forcing the receipt. This is not the opinion of one district, or of one party only, but it is the general opinion of every part of the people who have had time to examine the provisions of the bill; and really it will be a singular thing, if the House should oppose themselves to the universal voice of the kingdom.

Gentlemen seem to forget that we affect at least to call ourselves the representatives of the people. I know that we are no such thing; but we affect to call ourselves so. Yet in this House, only fifteen gentlemen could be found to vote against a measure upon which, out of this House, there is not merely a majority, but an unanimity of dissent. Ministers, in this instance, cannot plead their usual subterfuge, that it is the mere cry of a party. It is no such thing. Unanimous disapprobation has come from the most extraordinary places. Even the common council have been unanimous. There are but two sorts of representation, actual and virtual. You cannot pretend to call yourselves the actual representatives of the people, but you say you are the virtual. Prove yourselves so then, by obeying their united voice. I hope and trust that you will show yourselves in some degree, entitled to the name of virtual representatives. I will fairly tell you, that even if you were to do so, I should not consider it as a sufficient proof that you are the virtual representatives of the people, unless I see you also sympathising with the people. You must make common cause with them. You must invite them to sacrifices by your own example. You must lead the way. Mr. Burke once illustrated this principle by a story very much in point. A French regiment, in speaking of an old colonel whom they had lost, and of a new one that had succeeded him, extolled the first to the skies—"What particular reason have you for your ardent affection for the old colonel, rather than the new?" said a person to them. "We have no other reason, said they, than this—the old colonel always said *Allons, mes enfans!*" The new colonel says, *Allez, mes enfans!*" This was, indeed, a striking contrast; and just in this manner we ought to act towards the people. We ought not to say to them, "Go, make sacrifices!"—but, "Let us make sacrifices." To rouse the energy of the people, let us hear of the sacrifices of the crown. It is from the highest place that the example ought to be given. It will animate and cheer the heart of the kingdom:

"Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris."
When men are called on to give up their pleasures, whatever they may be, whether of horses or gardens, it is but reasonable that they should see the crown participating in the sacrifice. But when, instead of this, we see only that new patronage is to

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be obtained out of the levying of 14 millions in this way, we must feel that these are bad symptoms, and that there is no common cause in the exertions we are called upon to make; and we are made to believe that there is something in this war, which makes it unfit for all such examples to be given.

A right hon. gentleman says, that expenditure will not be diminished on account of this tax—it will only change hands—great sums will be wanted, he says, to clothe, and to maintain the army. I wish the House to remark the expression.—I certainly believe him—great sums will go to the army. But is that any consolation to me? If 200*l.* is to be taken out of my pocket, what care I to whom it is to be paid? But this very argument is, and ought to be, an object of just and serious alarm to the nation: for while these enormous sums are to be paid into the hands of government, it becomes almost the sole consumer. Let us examine the fact. One-tenth of the expenditure of the whole kingdom is estimated at 7 millions. That makes the total expenditure 70 millions; but, perhaps, as this is not the just test, and there may be evasion, the total expenditure may be 100,000,000*l.* On this ground, it appears that the public expenditure has been between 30, and 40,000,000*l.* a year during this war. If then it be true, that the expenses of the war are so essential to revenue, what a prospect for us, when this source of revenue shall be cut off! The right hon. gentleman, in speaking of a pledge, is extremely desirous of overlooking and explaining away his own. He is not willing to remember the emphatical pledge that he gave, never to make peace with the Jacobin government of France. What can we expect from men who have, through the whole of the war, shrunk from every pledge they have ever given? It is only by their removal that the nation can be saved from its present perilous situation. They are either fools or hypocrites who attempt to separate ministers from their measures or affect to think that our affairs can be retrieved in their hands. The country must take its fate, if they are so dull of intellect, or so infatuated, as to conceive that they can be rescued from their present situation by the imbecility that brought them into it. We are called upon to make this dreadful sacrifice in order to terrify France! We are to give up 7,000,000*l.* in one year, in addition to all

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our other burthens, to show to France, that we have, what their poet calls, "*l'embarras derichesses*." Terrify France! What, by showing that we are forced to abandon the funded system, which has supported us through so many difficulties, because we dare no longer persist in it? Terrify France—by an exaction which will not be paid—which will convulse the country from one end to the other—or which, if it were possible to pay it, would paralyse all our future operations, and lay us helpless at their feet! But is it not too much to call for unanimity in the farther prosecution of this war? They whose incapacity has been proved by a series of the most unvaried disasters, call for unanimity! Can their late acts, their persecutions, their violences in England and Scotland, and still more so in Ireland, delude the people of France into an idea that they have the hearts of the country with them? Take the converse of the proposition. Would not the ministers of the crown deride a declaration from the Directory, in which, if a La Vendée were still raging in France or Ireland, now they still talked of possessing the unanimous sentiments of the people. The treatment of Ireland was such as to harrow up the soul—it was shocking to the heart to think that a nation of brothers was thus to be trampled on like the most remote colony of conquered strangers; and it was monstrous to hear the minister talk of wielding Ireland as a weapon of force, Ireland which he was now holding himself under a military hand! The hon. gentleman takes it amiss that my hon. friend should say, that the whole contest is about nine or ten worthless men who are our ministers: and yet can any man question the truth of the assertion who has observed their manners? During the whole course of our misfortunes they have not failed in their sole undivided object—in amassing for themselves, and followers, places, pensions, peerages and honours. But what is the true and only ground of unanimity? In the support of a minister, confidence in the rectitude of his system, and in his capacity for carrying it into effect. Can they expect this unanimity? Review their grounds of the war, the Scheldt, Flanders, the decree of the 19th of November, &c. have they not given up every one of these motives, as well as all that followed them, and their talents were now employed in explaining away the declara-

tions they had made. They could not, however, so easily explain away the quotation that they made from Virgil. It stood on record:

—potuit quæ plurima virtus
Esse fuit, toto certatum est corpore regni.

They first held out to us the tempting occasion of attacking France, united with all Europe. Year after year their object changed as well as their temptation; the brink of bankruptcy; ruined finances; distracted country; reign of terror unsupportable; reign of terror at an end, and consequently the vigour it created; all in their turn were the baits they held out, and all, as they failed, made way for new delusions. Every thing was to be effected by our allies; and accordingly four millions one year, two millions another, and two millions sent by stealth in the third, were declared to be the cheapest way of carrying on the war: now we are cut off from this cheap mode of defence. I was alarmed for the consequence; since being cut off from this cheapest mode, I feared we must be forced to take more extravagant means; but here I was happily disappointed; for this relief from the Emperor, has been accompanied by lowering our army and navy at home. Where he has failed, therefore he has gained. Again, said he, that there was no way of supporting the Bank but by sending money to the Emperor; he did send it, and the Bank stopt! He is now prevented from sending any more money to the Emperor; and I understand that the paper of the Bank is in better credit than it was! In the same manner every declaration that he has ever made has failed him; but none so lamentably as in his finance. He has uniformly, in each December, stated the expense of the year millions under what it has turned out to be; and yet he calls for unanimity! He can expect no unanimity, and in truth there is no remedy for our evils, but peace. And this is not all; we must have peace, and repose, not merely by the change of ministers and their condign punishment, but by a thorough change and reform in the system which has brought us to this ruin, by a return to the principles of liberty, not of power. Without this there can be no preservation for this country. I feel it as my most solemn duty to speak out. Unless Ireland is instantly conciliated, and brought back to the enjoyment of its genuine rights and communion in the constitution; unless Scotland is also reconciled; unless

all the three kingdoms are restored to the blessings of that peace and perfect freedom of which they have been deprived, there can be no chance for the country to rise out of her present misfortunes; nor until you accomplish this, can you hope ever for peace, because until you obtain this you cannot speak to France with the power of union; nor can you delude the Directory with the boast of strength while they see you alienating by persecution every part of the empire.

In the argument which I have taken the liberty to trouble you with, I have not wandered from the particular measure of the day, because it is inseparable from the causes that have given rise to it. Sir, this is no common tax. Do not let us delude ourselves with the idea that there is no danger. It is imminent. No human being can calculate the horrors to which this measure may give rise. I deprecate rashness. I know that men are fond of talking of the theoretical blessings of our constitution; but unless you make the people feel its practical blessings you do nothing. Talk of the Jacobin principles of the French Directory! No man has made so many Jacobins as the right hon. gentleman; and if this measure is to be persevered in, there is no saying to what we shall be driven. The tax may be put under the management of the military. Suppose it cannot be collected—what comes next? They may distrain; and when they have seized on our beds and chairs, they may last of all take our persons—"Contra opes primum, et post in corpora sæviri." Is such a measure to be hurried through this House? I am guilty of no exaggeration. I am sure that if time be given, you will have from all the great towns, from Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and elsewhere, remonstrances as strong as those you have seen from the city of London, from my constituents, and from the borough of Southwark. I shudder at the consequences if you persist. They may be dreadful. It is only by a quick return to the genuine principles of our ancestors, that we can be safe. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Dundas) has said, that "if there were men who could give peace to the country, without throwing things into confusion, the present ministers would be the basest of mankind if they did not yield and make way for them." If there are any men who feel themselves capable of restoring peace to these kingdoms, with-

out a change of system, or restoring the constitution to its vigour, I can only say they are more sanguine than I am. I can speak without any personal motive on the subject; for I publicly declare, that I never will have a seat, high or low, in any administration, until public opinion shall have decided for a thorough reform of abuses, and a direct return to the genuine principles of the British constitution. If there are men sanguine enough to think that they cannot only procure peace, but tranquillize the country without this, let them try it. I will make no part in any such administration.

Mr. Pitt said:—Before I proceed to make any remark upon the wide variety of topics which the honourable gentlemen upon the other side of the House have introduced, I shall just advert to the last point on which the right hon. gentleman insisted. The other parts of his speech were directed against the whole of the measure in substance, but in the latter part he separately urged the propriety of delay. The right hon. gentleman founds this argument for delay upon the agitation which this question has excited in the public mind, and the objections to which the measure is liable in its application to a great number of his constituents. I am aware, that in all great towns, particularly in the metropolis, the objections will be felt with peculiar force; but at the same time I am sensible that in the provisions of which the bill is susceptible, many modifications may be expected, many are practicable consistently with the leading principle of the measure, and many are necessary in order, as far as possible, to prevent it from bearing hard in particular instances. I am aware even that greater modifications may be necessary than appeared to me requisite upon the first consideration of the subject, and when the first imperfect outline of it was presented. This, however, does not by any means tend to impeach the general principle of the measure. These objections are capable of modification without defeating the salutary object, which it is the purpose of the measure to secure. Instead of feeling these objections as completely destructive of the principle, every hour's reflection convinces me, that though it is our duty to inquire in what respects modification may be proper, how it may be practicable, how mitigation may be given so as to prevent any oppressive application of the measure, yet as to the ge-

neral necessity of providing for the public safety, and repelling the danger by which we are threatened, on the determination we shall form upon this question after mature discussion depends, whether by the exertions we have pledged ourselves to make, we shall rescue the country from impending calamity, and lay the foundation of as great a portion of future greatness and prosperity as any nation ever enjoyed, or whether we shall surrender the dignity of the British nation, and expose to inevitable ruin the sources of its glory and its power. Feeling as the representatives of the people, that it is our duty to provide for these important and essential objects, we shall be deterred by no difficulties, we shall spare no pains, we shall sacrifice every local prejudice, every partial opinion, to a consciousness of the necessity in which we are placed to make a vigorous exertion. Feeling as I do that necessity, I know my duty too well not to persist in what I conceive to be a measure calculated to save the country from the present danger, and to enable it to struggle against future attacks. It is our first duty, as guardians, to provide for its present safety, and to transmit to posterity the blessings which we have enjoyed, and the means of preserving them. It is by these considerations that our conduct ought to be directed; it is by these great maxims of policy that the measure ought to be judged.

Can we then conceive it our duty, on account of some particular objections of some alleged hardship of application, to hang up the bill altogether before its provisions have been discussed, before its details have been arranged? Must we forego the opportunity of suggesting the case where the evil would be felt, of removing prejudice where it exists, and obviating objections where they are well founded? Instead of agreeing to any delay, both in real respect to those who complain of the hardship with which the bill in its present shape would attach, and in duty to the public, for whose service in this important crisis we are called upon to provide, we ought to lose no time to examine the bill with the utmost attention, and see where the pressure which it would occasion may be mitigated. What are the particulars and extent of the farther modifications which it may still be necessary to introduce, it will not be incumbent upon me now to state. It will be recollected that, when I first opened the subject, I stated

that, as a visible criterion of income, I preferred the payment of the assessed taxes, because it was more comprehensive, better calculated to diffuse the burthen, and more susceptible of modification in the various classes where it would be required than any other criterion which could be taken. It will be recollected, not by the right hon. gentleman, who had thought it proper to absent himself from his attendance in parliament, but it will be recollected by the House, that one great recommendation of this criterion, I stated to be, that the principle being still preserved, it furnished greater means of modification, more opportunity for providing for the particular cases of hardships and inconvenience, than any other criterion which could be adopted. The means of this modification are now in our power, and we shall but perform our duty to our constituents by showing our readiness to consider the inconvenience, and to apply the remedy. That many modifications are necessary I am aware, and in the committee, both those which I may propose, and which others may suggest, will be considered. This I trust will be a sufficient answer to what fell from a worthy alderman at the beginning of the debate. Much as I differ from that hon. gentleman as to the extent of the abatement, and the nature of the scale of contribution he proposed, I was glad to hear the manly and decided manner in which he enforced the necessity of great exertion, and the propriety of raising a considerable sum, without recurring to the system of funding. I am convinced that the sentiments he expressed were congenial to the feelings of a great majority of his constituents and of the country; and I could not help remarking the contrast between the language he held, and the tone of the right hon. gentleman on the other side, compared with the sentiments of their respective constituents, in the indiscriminate opposition to every part of the plan, which characterised the speeches of both the honourable gentlemen.

Having made these observations on the question of delay, I shall proceed shortly to consider some of the other topics on which the hon. gentlemen insisted. I do not complain of the wide field of argument which they took up; I know that in a parliamentary sense they were regular: whether they were justifiable in the use they made of this privilege, and whether they

made a proper choice of the topics which they introduced on the present subject, I shall leave for the House to determine. The object of this bill shortly is, an extraordinary grant of money for the support of the war; it proposes to raise within the year a certain part of the supplies, by a tax on income, on the visible criterion of the assessed taxes, subject to modification as circumstances may require. In considering the whole of the case, then, the first question that occurs is, whether it is proper to grant any money at all? Then, whether the principle of raising a certain part within the year ought to be admitted? And, thirdly, whether by this criterion attaching to income in the course of expenditure, the burden would in general be fairly apportioned?

As to the first point, whether any money at all ought to be granted, an hon. gentleman (Mr. Sheridan), though he did not say so in very words, by the whole of his argument supposed the negative. The right hon. gentleman who spoke last distinctly argued, that while ministers continued in power, he could not agree to any supplies being granted. In stating this to have been their meaning, I am endeavouring to do justice to their mode of reasoning. Unless upon this idea, more than three-fourths of their observations were irrelevant to the subject now before the House. If they do not contend that peace cannot be obtained by the present ministers, that they ought to be dismissed before any scheme of supply can at all be a fit subject for discussion, the greater part of their argument is quite foreign to the matter now under consideration.

The right hon. gentleman, while he argues that my right hon. friend considered the majority of the House and his majesty's ministers as the same, forgets that his hon. friend, when he talked of our going out of our places, did not address himself to the House, but gave it, as a very friendly advice no doubt, personally to us. It was expressed with a hope that we would of ourselves abandon the offices we held, as the means of obtaining peace. The hon. gentleman then must settle this inconsistency with his hon. friend beside him. But before the hon. gentleman, with all his talents, can demonstrate the propriety of our dismissal, he ought to show that the nine persons, whom he proposes to pick up between London and Windsor, will administer the public affairs better than those

by whom they are now administered; he must bring forward something more conclusive and more convincing than any thing he had to offer when the dismissal of ministers was last discussed, the failure of which attempt had induced him to quit the service of his constituents, and his despair of success had led him to abdicate his public character. If I understand him right, he considers as preliminary to every measure of public defence, to every exertion in support of the war, a radical change is necessary. What the right hon. gentleman means by this preliminary, expressed in a manner so large and comprehensive, in terms no less obscure than undefined; whether a parliamentary reform is to be only a part of this sweeping change; how this change of system is to operate as a means of saving the country; how this unlimited change is to conduce to the public safety in preparing exertion and in repelling danger, I am really at a loss to conceive. In considering the propriety of such a change of system, or such a preliminary as the introduction of new men into office, it certainly will be important for the House to ascertain, whether such a change of ministers is calculated to secure us against the dangers with which we are threatened, whether it is calculated to check the ambition of the enemy, and to procure a peace that will satisfy the honour of the nation, and preserve the sources of the public wealth and prosperity.

But the hon. gentleman says, that the whole tenor of our language at the beginning of the present contest was, that no peace could be made with the Jacobin republic, and that France is thus justified in refusing to make peace with the present administration. At no period of the war did we ever express such a sentiment or even entertain the idea that no peace could be made with republican France. I remember the quotation from Virgil to which he has alluded, and as far as I can recollect it was used in one of those debates in which the right hon. gentleman proposed that overtures should be made for peace at a period when we contended that no security for peace could be obtained, and that the evils of war were not to be compared to the inadequate peace which then could have been concluded. The right hon. gentleman then urged the question, whether no extremity of danger could induce us to make such overtures? I then answered, that this

must ever be a question of comparison, that we must decide as circumstances might arise, and at least we ought to persevere till our means were exhausted, till we could support the contest no longer, and we could say,

Toto certatum est corpore regni.

The right hon. gentleman says, that the meaning of Virgil cannot be explained away, but he seemed to think that Virgil's language might be improved. The hon. gentleman urged the propriety of making overtures even at that period, and contended, as he often had done, that if reasonable terms of peace were refused it would unite England and divide France. He then retorted, that after such overtures were rejected,

Toto certandum est corpore regni.

The right hon. gentleman has now seen the overtures made and rejected, and now when he wishes to bind me down to the meaning of Virgil, I think he ought not to forget his Latin pledge.

If the right hon. gentleman has seen that all attempts at negotiation have been unavailable, if he can look to any period in which he is called upon to fulfil his pledge, if he means to animate the public exertions, to exhort to perseverance, to stimulate their zeal for the maintenance of the national honour and the national safety, at a moment when these objects were thus unequivocally stated, he would not, as he now does, attempt to disarm their courage, and to distract their efforts. What did the hon. gentleman expect from the overtures he proposed? What degree of insult and contumely did he lay his account to endure before he was to be roused to energy and to honour? Did he expect any thing more insulting than the reception our overtures had obtained, any thing more repulsive, more haughty, more injurious, than the proceedings of the enemy; any thing more decisive of their determined spirit of hostility than their refusal to discuss the terms we proposed, or to propose any terms in their turn on which they were willing to conclude a peace? If any thing can meet the hon. gentleman's ideas of insult, sufficiently humiliating to require him to act upon his pledge, let him look to the negotiation at Lisle, and the conduct of the enemy upon that occasion. The right hon. gentleman, though he admitted formerly that their might be occasions to demand unanimity and exertion, thinks himself freed from his pledge, because ministers were never

sincere in their exertions for peace, and France was justified in refusing to treat with them. But when did the hon. gentleman discover this? When did the light flash upon his mind, that ministers originally were hostile to the republican government of France, and therefore could not be sincere? It is somewhat surprising that this never occurred to the hon. gentleman before the pledge was given, instead of discovering it as our apology for eluding the pledge after it was given. If the dislike of ministers to French principles proves their aggression, and justifies the hostility of the enemy, this cannot be a new discovery; it certainly would as well have justified the hon. gentleman in distrusting any efforts they might make, even while they urged the overtures, on the refusal of which they promised unanimity, as now when they have seen their overtures made without effect. The declaration of France, at the beginning of the contest, proved that on their side it was a war of aggression, and on ours a war of necessity and good faith towards our allies. If ministers did at first see the danger of French principles, without embarking in the contest, must they have been the aggressors when they saw their fears realized in the actual aggression, in which the principles they had apprehended finally terminated? At no period of the contest did we say there could be no peace with republican France. We said, that for peace we would not agree to prostrate the nation at the feet of the enemy; that we could not agree to give up what was essential to the safety of the country. If the hon. gentleman can prove, that we have applied for peace, disowning the justice of our cause, abandoning the principles on which the present safety and future prosperity of the country are founded, he would prove that we considered the period arrived when every exertion had been made, and when the struggle was to be given up, because it could no longer be supported. The right hon. gentleman, however, does not say that we have acted in this manner. What then are the opinions of those who have uniformly, or rather with growing zeal and devotion, contended that the war was just on the part of France, and unjust upon the side of this country? Have they not repeatedly said, on former occasions, that our ordinary resources were exhausted? And to day, with mysterious silence, they pass over the subject, and cautiously decline giving

any opinion on the efficacy of former resources, while they reprobate new expedients; and say nothing about the propriety of resorting to the funding system, while they condemn the principle of every plan by which it may be relieved.

The hon. gentlemen have said, that our ordinary resources are exhausted, and that no extraordinary resources can be employed. I leave it to the House then to judge how far those, who in principle give the enemy a right to ask all, who, by decrying our resources, give them confidence to advance every pretension, by kindly informing them that from our inability to resist, they may extort whatever they demand, are the true friends to their country, or the enlightened advocates of peace? I am convinced that the majority of the House and of the country will feel that peace is not likely to be obtained upon terms consistent with our honour or our safety, by dismissing ministers, if they are to be followed by men who have ever viewed with kindness the principles of the enemy;—by men who have justified every act of the enemy, while they have traduced every measure of the British government;—by men who have extolled the resources of the French, with a zeal equalled only by the perseverance with which they have depreciated the energy and the resources of their own country. Whatever opinions such men profess to have of the sincerity of ministers, of their capacity for the conduct of affairs: whatever conclusions they may draw from the review of the finances and the magnitude of our expenses, I leave it to the country and to the world to determine, whether, under such auspices, there could be any chance of peace upon terms short of the basest humiliation to an insolent foe, and the most criminal surrender of every principle of national honour, and every source of national greatness.

The right hon. gentleman speaks of peace as absolutely necessary: but has the hon. gentleman explained how peace is to be obtained? After encouraging the perseverance of the enemy in their wild and destructive design, by holding out how little resistance we can oppose to their attempts, the right hon. gentleman says not a word of this. He thinks he does his duty to his country and his constituents, by enforcing the necessity of peace, without saying a syllable of the means of pacification. Because he thinks

peace cannot be obtained without a change of system, he would in the mean time suspend all grants of supply. After disavowing every opinion we have pronounced, after recanting every principle we have maintained, after abandoning every pledge we have given, after neglecting every means of defence, and renouncing every manly exertion, how would the hon. gentleman have us appease the fury of the enemy, and secure the safety of England? Why there must be a total change of system in England and Ireland! Till Ireland was in a better situation France could have no inducement to make peace! What this change, so mysteriously announced, is to be in detail, we are left to guess. Are you to neglect the means of defence, if you cannot persuade the enemy to make peace? The change which the right hon. gentleman recommends, I suspect, would be to remove those distinctions, and to sweep away those privileges which have raised the hatred and envy of France. But the right hon. gentleman contends that the French would be justified in refusing to make peace, because Ireland is not unanimous; would he, however, consider ministers justified in refusing to make peace, because La Vendée was in a state of insurrection? If in his eyes this would be an insufficient reason for refusing to make peace with France, when nearly one-fourth of its inhabitants were in a state of open hostility against the tyranny under which they were oppressed, will he say that it is a reason for the persevering hostility of the enemy, that Ireland is in a state of danger, arising from the necessary exertion of vigour to resist the operation of French principles diffused every where with such assiduity, and in Ireland with peculiar success;—circulated with that industry, which they have ever shown, to supplant by their desolating principles of liberty the real practical blessings of the British constitution?

Mr. Pitt declared, he could not conceive how that degree of perfect unanimity, which the right hon. gentleman seemed to think so necessary, could be obtained while these principles were disseminated with such industry; but this was not the time to enter into this discussion, and he had only alluded to this subject, to show the consistency of the right hon. gentleman's argument, when applied to the case of La Vendée. But after all, did the right hon. gentleman seriously ima-

gine, that he had convinced the House that it was unnecessary for them to make great efforts? He had relied much upon the declarations which had been made out of doors respecting this tax: as far as the public opinion accorded with the right hon. gentleman's views, so far as he seemed inclined to treat it with respect; but he totally laid out of his consideration those sentiments which accompanied those declarations. Though, in some instances, the people had expressed their disapprobation of this tax, in its present state, without any of the alterations and modifications which it would be necessary to make, yet they never went the length of the right hon. gentleman, and said, that no supplies ought at all to be raised; on the contrary, in the case of the borough of Southwark, they had expressed the strongest sense of the necessity of making great and vigorous exertions for the public defence. Could this be a subject of doubt, after all the papers relative to the rupture of the negotiation had been laid before the House, and above all, since they had seen the late proclamation of the Directory? Indeed, he should feel ashamed if it could now become matter of argument.

If, then, it might be assumed, as an indisputable proposition, that great and vigorous exertions were necessary at the present arduous crisis, the next point for consideration was, whether a large part of the supplies of the year ought to be raised by the mode now proposed, within the year; or whether the whole should be raised by the old system of funding? This was the real question for consideration; but, instead of discussing it, the gentlemen on the other side had exerted all their abilities to prove that we ought to make no efforts at all. They had never given any answer to the only important question, viz. if great exertions were necessary, how were they to be made? Instead of this, they had only said, that a proposal to depart from the funding system came with a very bad grace from him, who had funded so much. This could not be considered as a very strong argument; and he should have thought, that the gentlemen after so long an absence from their parliamentary duty, would have discovered some more efficacious mode of reasoning, than to say, "Do not adopt a good measure, because you ought to have adopted it sooner." Surely the House had a right to expect, from a grave and

experienced statesman, something more than a declaration, that if any means could be devised to raise a large proportion of the supplies within the year, and if these means were in their nature unobjectionable, he should not oppose them. This could not be considered as a very great instance of condescension. However, the principal objection of the right hon. gentleman seemed to be, that those extraordinary means ought not to be resorted to now, when a great and obvious necessity existed, because we had not employed them when no such necessity did exist.

But gentlemen seemed to consider, that, by adopting the present mode of raising a part of the supply, the system of funding was to be given up, and the present substituted in its room. If gentlemen had been present in their places when this measure was first proposed, they would have known that the funding system was not given up; on the contrary, he had proposed that the larger part of the supplies of the year should be raised by way of loan. It was thought advisable, as the funds had been so much increased, to ease them, by procuring a large part of the supplies in a different mode; therefore, so far from giving up the system of funding, the present plan was intended to relieve it. That this object, if it could be attained, would be most desirable, could not be questioned, even by those who disliked the present tax.

Having said thus much, he did not think it necessary to argue this point more at length upon the present occasion. The point that called particularly for the consideration of the House was this—assuming that it was necessary to raise a large sum within the year, was the present plan, the most expedient, and the most likely to be effectual? In considering this subject, the two hon. gentlemen on the other side had argued very differently. The first called it a tax upon property; the other, a general tax upon income. The latter was nearer the truth, but neither of them was correct. With respect to the hon. gentleman who called this a tax upon property, it was astonishing that he should be so ill informed of what passed in that House, even though he was absent, as to state as arguments against this plan, the very topics which he (Mr. Pitt) had urged in order to obviate some objections which had been made to it. The hon. gentleman had contended, that a tax upon property, supposing it possible that the amount of

the property could be ascertained, would not be a proper measure. In this opinion, however, the honourable gentleman differed from those declarations out of doors, against this tax, upon which so much reliance had been placed on the other side of the House. However, the hon. gentleman had pushed this argument to a greater length than he had done. He (Mr. Pitt) had said, that if the amount of every man's property could be ascertained, it would be a most desirable thing to make the people contribute to the public exigence in proportion to their wealth. But there existed no means of ascertaining the property of individuals, except such as were of a nature that could not be resorted to. Instead, therefore, of a tax upon property, this was what he had stated it to be, a tax upon general expenditure. In opening it to the House, he had anticipated an objection which he thought would be made, viz. that this tax applied only to such income as was in expenditure. This was an inconvenience which it was impossible to avoid, without having recourse to such a scrutiny of property as must, in every point of view, be highly objectionable. That the present plan was in its nature imperfect he was ready to admit, and had stated it to be so when he first introduced the subject; but he thought it the best and most general criterion that could be found. The question then was, whether this plan was so very imperfect, and so objectionable in principle, that it ought immediately to be rejected; or whether, after proper alteration and modification, it might not be of the greatest public benefit? The right hon. gentleman opposite to him had not considered this with his usual accuracy; for, because this tax was calculated at seven millions, and that it was not to exceed a tenth part of a person's income, he had calculated the whole income of the country at only seventy millions; but the inaccuracy of this calculation must be obvious to the right hon. gentleman, when he recollected, that though this tax never took more than one-tenth of the income, yet, in many cases, it took only the 120th part, and in some cases took nothing. At all events, this observation was inapplicable, because he had never spoken of the general income of the country, but only so much of it as was in expenditure. Without dilating more upon this part of the subject, he should say a few words upon what he considered as the leading objections to the measure.

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The right hon. gentleman had made a division of the different kinds of property, which appeared to him to be incorrect, inasmuch as it omitted one great source of income. The right hon. gentleman's division was, income arising from landed estates, from commercial pursuits, and from property in the funds. As to the income derived from professional exertions, the right hon. gentleman had very properly classed it under the head of commercial gains. But he had omitted one great source of income, viz. that which was received as the reward of labour; and of the latter class many were exempted by the criterion now proposed. The right hon. gentleman had contended, that this would operate as a tax upon funded property, which always had been, and must ever be, considered as inviolate. But the measure now proposed by no means tended to affect property in the funds. No description of income, whether arising from landed estates, commercial pursuits, or funded property, was meant to be exempted from the operation, because it was meant to attach upon expenditure in general. Where was the injustice of this? "Why," says the right hon. gentleman, "by taxing the expenditure of a man whose income is derived from the funds, you do in fact tax his property in the funds." If this was a valid objection, it ought not only to induce the House to reject this measure, but to repeal every tax that ever was laid on; because it was impossible to suggest a tax which would not be paid by people having money in the funds. Every tax imposed upon consumption, of course must be defrayed by people having property in the funds: but it was absurd to say that was a tax upon the funds. If this objection was never made to taxes which were in their nature perpetual, it appeared to him singular that it should now, for the first time, be made to a tax which was merely temporary.

The next objection of the right hon. gentleman was, that a tax upon commercial income was not just; for, said he, a man's landed property is his own, but the income he derives from commerce is partly derived from his industry. This was not a time to enter into a minute discussion of these arguments, but surely the right hon. gentleman did not mean to contend that commercial gains were not a fair object of taxation. Those gains were derived under the protection of the laws of the country, and consequently ought to contribute pro-

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portionably to support them. He did not, however, mean to contend that many distinctions ought not to be made, and in the committee modifications would undoubtedly be proposed. As to persons who employed great capitals, in proportion to their annual gains, they would be less affected than persons of landed property; but all that could be inferred from this was, that it was a recommendation of the criterion. Perhaps this criterion, as far as it affected the lower classes, did not make distinctions enough. It would be recollected, that the particular reason he assigned for making this tax lower upon houses than upon the other articles was, that it should not fall too heavily upon that species of income arising from retail trade. The right hon. gentleman had next censured the mode of appeal given in this case. Some alterations might also be made upon this subject; but still he thought that mode of correcting the operation of the tax might be useful. The right hon. gentleman himself had admitted, that it might with propriety be applied to landed property; and, on the other hand, he (Mr. Pitt) was willing to admit, that as far as it related to the lower class of retail dealers, some modification was necessary. These were the general objections which had been made to the plan, and he should now leave them to the consideration of the House, with the observations he had made upon them.

He was aware that there were many who thought that, rather than take this visible criterion of ascertaining property, it would be better to lay a general tax upon property. Undoubtedly, if they could find the means of taxing property equally, without compelling improper disclosure, it would be a most desirable object; but as that could not be done without being open to stronger objections than the present plan, it became necessary that some visible criterion should be found. If that were the case, could any criterion be found more general in its nature than the assessed taxes? The persons immediately affected by this tax amounted to 800,000, and through them extended to about 4,000,000 of persons. By this plan a great number of poor persons would be wholly excluded, and above half of the number before-mentioned would contribute very little.

The committee upon this bill might, and he had no doubt would, make many amendments in favour of shop-keepers;

but all this would be consistent with the principle of the bill. The committee might, if they thought proper, make an alteration in the scale proposed, without any dereliction of the principle of the bill. Many mitigations were undoubtedly necessary; but if the utmost inference that could be drawn from this was, that the exemptions should be carried farther than was proposed in the committee of ways and means, how did that affect the general principle of the measure, when they had the means of obviating in the committee the only objections that had been made against it? Without going now into these details, which he wished to reserve for a future period, he should only say, that if it was admitted that great exertions ought to be made, and that a large part of the supplies ought to be raised within the year, and if the only objection to this criterion was, that it would bear hard upon the lower orders of retail dealers, and it appeared to be within their power to obviate this objection; then, upon what ground could they hesitate, unless they had changed their opinions; unless, instead of making preparations for war, they were determined to begin by begging for peace from a haughty and insulting enemy? If they were not determined to give up every means of exertion, had they any option but to go into a committee upon this bill, to remedy the inconveniencies that might result from it, if passed in its present shape? What was the conduct which the gentlemen on the other side wished the House to adopt? It was to reject this measure at once, and thereby to declare that they would make no efforts to raise the supplies within the year. If the House adopted this advice, it would be proclaiming to France and to the world, their repentance for having dared to stand up in defence of their laws, their religion, and of every thing that was valuable to them as Englishmen. It would be humbling themselves before a haughty adversary; and, when they had no means of defence, imploring mercy and forgiveness from an enemy from whom we had to expect neither. Upon these grounds, he hoped the House would read the bill a second time, and let it go into a committee.

Mr. Fox, in reply, said: The change I want is a radical reform of the corruptions that have crept into the constitution, and of the abuses which now deform its practice; a reform in the representation of the people in parliament, and a restoration of

the pure rights and privileges of the people at large, which have been lately entrenched upon by persecutions and restraints of every kind. This is the change that I want. It is a change which has for its object to bring back to its purity, and to preserve the British constitution; and to unite all ranks of people in its support.

Mr Alderman *Combe* said, he had that day received instructions from his constituents, in Common-hall, to oppose the bill, notwithstanding any modifications. He would always obey the instructions of his constituents.

The House divided :

Tellers

YEAS	{ The Lord Hawkesbury - } { Mr. Charles Yorke - - } 175
Noes	{ Mr. Tierney - - - - } { Mr. Alderman Combe - } 50

So it was resolved in the Affirmative.

List of the Minority.

Astley, J. W.	North, Dudley
Barclay, Geo.	Peirse, Henry
Beauclerk, C. G.	Pochin, W.
Bird, W. W.	Rawdon, hon. J.
Bouverie, hon. E.	Rawdon, hon. G.
Brogden, J.	Richardson, J.
Burch, J. R.	Robson, R. B.
Burdett, sir F.	Russell, lord W.
Byng, George	Sheridan, R. B.
Clayton, sir R.	Sinclair, sir J.
Coke, D. P.	Spencer lord R.
Copley, sir L.	Stanley, lord
Courtenay, J.	St. John, hon. St. A.
Denison, W. J.	Tarleton, general
Edwards, Bryan	Thompson, Thomas
Fitzpatrick, R.	Thornton, H.
Fox, right hon. C. J.	Tierney, George
Hare, James	Tufton, hon. Henry
Hawkins, sir C.	Tufton, hon. John
Howard, Henry	Walwyn, James
Hussey, Wm.	Western, C. C.
Jekyll, J.	Wigley, E.
Kemp, T.	Wilson, Richard
Langton, J.	TELLERS.
Lloyd, J. M.	Tierney, George
Mainwaring W.	Combe, alderman
Nicholls, J.	

Mr. Tierney's Motion respecting the Office of Third Secretary of State.] Dec. 15. Mr. *Tierney* observed, that on a former occasion he had entered fully into the subject on which he grounded his present motion, and therefore he should not have occasion to trouble the House with many observations. He adverted to the last report of the Committee of Finance, from which he said he drew his facts, and moved,

" That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to represent to his majesty, that we observe with great concern the new division of the state office which his majesty has been pleased to make, by the creation of the office of a third secretary of state for the war department; a department instituted for the first time in the month of July 1794, and subsequently recognized and confirmed by an order of his majesty in council on the 27th of February 1795. By that order it appears, that the said war department is put upon an establishment, which gives to the crown the distribution of the following new salaries, namely, one of 6,000*l.*, one of 1,500*l.*, one of 650*l.*, one of 450*l.*, two of 300*l.*, one of 200*l.*, one of 150*l.*, and three of 100*l.* per annum each, all of them salaries free from every deduction.

" That we feel ourselves called upon to observe, that the business of the state office has usually been transacted by two principal secretaries of state, and that the office, commonly called the office of third secretary of state, or secretary for the colonies, was unknown previous to the year 1768. That, in the year 1782, his majesty was graciously pleased to order that it should be suppressed; and that, by an act, passed in the 22nd year of his majesty's reign, it was enacted that it should be 'utterly abolished and taken away.'

" With all becoming deference, to submit to his majesty, that the revival of the office of third secretary of state can be regarded, by his faithful Commons, without jealousy, only when arising from the evident necessity of the case. That the new division of the state office, against which we humbly remonstrate, cannot, from what appears before us, be considered as necessary, while, from the profusion of emoluments with which it is accompanied, and the nature of the arrangements with which it has been carried into effect, it excites in us feelings of deep anxiety for the honour of his majesty, and the liberty and independence of parliament.

" That it appears, that the right hon. Henry Dundas did, while he performed the duties of the office now filled by his grace the duke of Portland, known by the name of the home department, transact every part of the business which has since been made to constitute the separate employment of a new war establishment: that he so transacted this business not only during a period of peace, but also during a long

period of war, namely, from the month of February 1793 to the month of July 1794, and that the only additional expense incurred, during the increased business of the latter period, was 530*l.* per annum, being the salary of four extra clerks. Farther to represent to his majesty, that the right hon. Henry Dundas did, while secretary of state for the home department, not only discharge the entire duties of that office (including, as at that time they did, those of the present new war establishment), but likewise consider himself as competent to execute the additional business of the treasurer of the navy, of the chief commissioner for the affairs of India, and of the keeper of the signet in Scotland.

“ That it would have afforded us some satisfaction to have perceived, that, when a new office was created to execute a part of the business of the home department, the home department had undergone a reduction of establishment proportioned to the decrease of the duties remaining to be discharged. But we observe with surprise that no such reduction has taken place; on the contrary we find the establishment to have been increased.

“ Humbly to represent to his majesty, that, in the year 1782, the nett receipt of the state office (including certain offices annexed to it) was 26,515*l.* per annum. The nett receipt, now established, is 41,430*l.* The total number of persons employed in the state office in 1782, was forty-eight, the number at present is sixty-six, so that the amount of nett established emoluments is increased by the sum of 14,915*l.* per annum, and the patronage augmented by an addition of eighteen places. That we cannot avoid also observing, that by a minute of the board of Treasury, dated the 14th of March 1783, it appears to have been his majesty's gracious intention to allow to each of his principal secretaries of state, being then two in number, a nett salary of 4,500*l.*, making together a sum of 9,000*l.*; whereas, by the establishment settled in council in 1795, they have each of them, being three in number, a nett salary of 6,000*l.*, making together a sum of 18,000*l.* We humbly conceive, that the business of the state office being divided amongst three secretaries instead of, as formerly, between two, would rather have justified a diminution than an increase of that allowance, which, in 1783, his majesty considered as sufficiently liberal.

“ To represent to his majesty, that, deeply as we are impressed with the magnitude of this increased influence, there are other circumstances attending the new arrangement of the state office, which we contemplate with still greater anxiety.

“ By the order of his majesty in council in 1795, the fees and gratuities, heretofore received by the different offices in the state office, were directed to be applied towards the expense of the establishment, and fixed salaries given in lieu of them. That, much as we approve of the principle of this regulation, we cannot refrain from humbly representing to his majesty, that, by the application of it in the instance before us, it has been made to serve as a secret and indirect mode of increasing the influence of the crown, and of adding to the revenues of the civil list, without the knowledge or consent of parliament.

“ It appears, that the sum, annually paid from the civil list to the support of the state office, previous to the present arrangement, was 14,240*l.* That, in the year 1795, in consequence of the new appropriation of the fees, and of the arrangements made on the division of the office, no more than 3,379*l.* was to be provided for out of the civil list, which therefore gained in that year the sum of 10,861*l.* That by the increase of fees received in the three first quarters of the year 1796 (the latest period to which the accounts before us are made up) the civil list was exonerated from any payment beyond the sum of 2,178*l.*, and even that sum liable to be diminished by the receipt of fees in the fourth quarter of that year; so that the gain to the civil list, from the order in council in 1795, was in 1796 at least 12,072*l.*, which added to the preceding 10,861*l.*, makes a sum, gained to the civil list in two years of the war, of 22,933*l.*, exclusive of what may have been derived from the operation of this arrangement in the year 1794 and 1797, of which we possess no authentic information, but which cannot be estimated at a less sum than was obtained in the two years of which we have an account.

“ That the civil list has not, however, gained these sums by the single operation of bringing the fees to account, but by certain arrangements, of a nature which we cannot contemplate without the most lively concern. It is with regret we see any part of his majesty's civil list depending

on the generosity of his ministers, and the patronage of the crown appearing to be dealt out as a matter of bargain. It appears that, by the arrangement in question, the right hon. lord Grenville, having, as auditor of the exchequer, a salary of 4,000*l.* per annum, and as secretary of state a salary of 6,000*l.* per annum, does not receive of the latter sum more than 3,200*l.* and consequently gives to the civil list the annual sum of 2,800*l.* That the right hon. Henry Dundas, having, as treasurer of the navy 4,000*l.*, as commissioner for the affairs of India 2,000*l.*, as keeper of the signet in Scotland 1,500*l.*, and as secretary of state a salary of 6,000*l.* per annum, does not in fact receive from this last appointment more than 2,000*l.*, and consequently gives to the civil list the annual sum of 4,000*l.*

“ That we humbly entreat his majesty’s royal attention to these facts, the result of which is, that the influence of the crown has been largely and unnecessarily increased; that enormous salaries have been assigned to persons who, by a private arrangement, were to surrender a great proportion of them to other uses than those for which they were ostensibly granted; and that a large sum has been secretly furnished to the civil list without the knowledge or consent of parliament.

“ That our duty to our country, and our attachment to his majesty, demand from us, particularly at the present awful crisis, this representation; and that we submit it to his majesty’s royal wisdom to take such steps, in regard to the matter of it, as may appear to his paternal goodness most likely to contribute to the honour of the crown, the independence of parliament, and the security of the constitution.”

Mr. *Tierney* then said, that he had done his duty in laying before the House the address they had just heard, and giving them an opportunity of deciding upon it.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, the situation in which he was placed was a very unpleasant one, as he was compelled to speak a great deal of himself. He should however, leave most of the topics to be discussed by his friends. He then entered into the history of the office of secretary of state, and said that he had never desired it, nor had he any idea of continuing in it above a few months when he was appointed. He said it was a very laborious office indeed, ever since it became

necessary to be so attentive to the police of the country, and that duty arose chiefly in consequence of the unfortunate introduction into this country of principles incompatible with the constitution. With regard to the office of treasurer of the navy, it had been considered as a sinecure; but it had not been so to him. He could give the House no encouragement to expect any reduction in the expenditure of his offices, for he knew not of one point in which, consistently with the due discharge of official duty, there could be any retrenchment.

Mr. *Pitt* passed a high panegyric on lord Grenville and Mr. Dundas, whose labours in the public service could only be adequately estimated by posterity, after the perusal of the documents which would be left behind them. He could not assent to an address which contained a misstatement of facts, and in which the conclusions drawn were erroneous.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, he never recollected a motion which betrayed more prejudice than the present. No distinction was made by the hon. mover, between a prodigal and a wise and liberal expenditure of the public money. If the hon. mover had any acquaintance with the public offices, he would confess that there never was more attention, diligence, and assiduity evinced in any office than in that where the right hon. secretary presided. Indeed, he thought him a model for imitation in this respect. It was therefore not without indignation that he had listened to the insinuations thrown out against ministers on this occasion.

Mr. *Abbot* defended the Finance Committee, of which he had the honour to be a member. To the reports of that committee he would adhere, nor could he agree in opinion with the rival report, now brought forward by the hon. gentleman. He appealed to the history of the last century, to prove the necessity of a third secretary of state. As to mere sinecure places, he thought they afforded a very proper and practicable field for reform; and the present was a moment which called for every possible retrenchment in that respect; but he was averse to any retrenchment that tended to diminish the splendour and dignity of the crown.

The motion was then negatived.

Debate in the Commons on the Assessed Taxes Bill.] January 3, 1798. The Bill for granting Additional Duties on the

Amount of certain Duties, now charged by Assessment, having undergone various modifications in the committee, Mr. Pitt this day moved, That it be now read a third time.

Mr. *Thompson* reprobated the bill, as being not only unwise, impolitic, and ruinous in its principle, but cruel, unequal, oppressive, and unjust in its particular provisions and distributions. In this horrid Robespierian requisition, no distinction was made between the poor and the rich, between the wretch who drudged for his daily subsistence, and the gentleman who kept twenty powdered lacqueys. In short it was a tax upon poverty. But the part which he thought the worst, was the concluding clause; by which it was enacted, that the bill might be altered during the present session; for when he considered the temper of the chancellor of the exchequer, and the disposition of the House to agree to any thing he might propose, he could not think that that clause was intended to leave room to alter the bill for the better. He could hardly think the right hon. gentleman would venture to walk along the streets, and count the desolation he had occasioned by the number of houses that would be emptied by the bill. To sum up all, it would put an end to private bounty, destroy the morals and intellects of the rising generation, by abridging their parents of the means of educating them; and would totally annihilate the education of the poor.

Mr. *Tyrwhitt* apprehended that the bill would be found very different in its operation from what was expected by the chancellor of the exchequer. Instead of one-tenth the tax would amount to one-sixth of the property of the rich, which would lessen consumption, and thereby make it fall ultimately on the poor.

Mr. *Nicholls* said, that the first objection to this tax, was, that it was unequal, and therefore unjust. If a tax is to be imposed on income, it must be on the idea that income is the evidence of property. Let two men draw each 1,000*l.* a year, one from the long annuities, the other from the short annuities, their incomes would be the same: and they would therefore pay the same tax, viz. 100*l.* Yet they had manifestly different portions of property; the annuity of one being worth 12 years purchase, while the annuity of the other was only worth six years purchase. But equal burthens on

unequal portions of property was unjust. There was the same injustice if the income was drawn from land, and one received his income from land of which he was proprietor in fee-simple, and the other from land of which he was tenant for life. It was in like manner unjust if one drew his income wholly from property, the other partly from property and partly from skill and industry.—The next objection was, that by compelling the higher orders of the middle class to economise, it would destroy the employment of the artizan, and diminish the revenue, by rendering the taxes on consumption less productive. To this some answer had been attempted; the chancellor of the exchequer said, he had relieved the lower orders by diminishing the tax on them. As far as the relief granted to the lower orders would occasion less money to be raised, he acknowledged the modification to be beneficial; it was *pro tanto* an abandonment of the bill. But as far as an additional burthen was laid on the higher orders of the middle class, he thought the modification was not beneficial. For the mischief was, that the direct pressure on the higher orders of the middle class would occasion an indirect pressure on the lower orders, by destroying their employment. He denied that the chancellor of the exchequer had spared the lower orders. He destroyed the life of the poor man, if he took away the employment by which he lived. But the chancellor of the exchequer had said, that the money would not be hoarded in the exchequer—that it would be expended, and afford employment. It was true, it would be expended, and afford employment; but to whom? to soldiers and sailors? Was there no inhumanity in saying to the artisan, “you have hitherto been entitled, from the usages and customs of society, to expect employment, but you cannot now have it; the money which used to feed you must now feed others; you must seek other employments, and emigrate, or go to the parish.” But the revenue would not suffer! Yes, it would suffer: the same money spent by soldiers and sailors would not yield the same revenue from the consumption of taxable commodities by soldiers and sailors, as it would if spent by artisans.—The next objection which had been taken was, that if income was to be made the standard of taxation, you must consent to the means necessary for investigating income. The chancellor of

the exchequer had resorted to the assessed taxes as the criterion of income; but he had acknowledged that this was an incorrect criterion; he had therefore assisted this criterion by the declaration of the party on oath, where the amount of his assessed taxes exceeded one-tenth of his income. The first objection to this was, that though it might relieve the man of the middle class, if assessed beyond one-tenth, yet it would not compel the great land proprietor, if taxed less than one-tenth, to pay more. But if this declaration on oath was to be resorted to, mark the consequences: if a man swore falsely, was he punishable or not punishable? Take it either way, he was punishable; but punishment must be preceded by conviction; conviction by trial; trial must involve inquiry and investigation. Were they prepared to subject every man to such an investigation into his most secret concerns, which must be the case if he was indicted for having given a false account of his property? He thought it not consistent either with the principles of a commercial nation, or with those of civil liberty, or even with domestic happiness. By whom might the prosecution be preferred? by any man, or only by the attorney general? If any man might institute the prosecution, every man who ventured to take this oath was at the mercy of his enemy; for if indicted for perjury, though acquitted, his character would be stained. The chancellor of the exchequer had stated, that the funding system had been carried to its utmost extent; that taxes on consumption or property were no longer expedient; that recourse must be had to a new mode of taxation, viz. by making income the standard of taxation. That it was true he had not yet discovered any correct criterion for investigating income, that he admitted that the criterion proposed, viz. the assessed taxes was in many cases unequal, and therefore unjust; that it would destroy the employment of the artisans; that it would diminish the present revenue arising from taxes on consumption, and must be assisted by the establishment of an inquisitorial tribunal inconsistent with civil liberty and private happiness. Was this the picture which would terrify our enemies?—But supply was necessary; Be it so; but not by these means. But was the supply necessary? He had doubts on that question. Was the continuance of the war necessary? He doubted it. He did not think that sincere en-

deavours had been employed by ministers to obtain peace.—There was another ground on which he thought it his duty to hesitate before he assented to the proposed tax; viz. a doubt whether, even supposing the continuance of the war was necessary, it was expedient to trust the money in the hands of the present ministers, and whether it was not our duty to suspend the measure, and to vote an address to his majesty to remove his ministers. Every event of the present war had convinced him, that the chancellor of the exchequer was a man of no talents. He acknowledged his talents as a debater in that House, that he possessed sarcasm, sneer, irony, wit; above all, he possessed the happy talent of multiplying and bringing his words in such a manner, that it was hardly possible to affix a precise meaning to his language; that to this he joined the most successful knack of misrepresenting the arguments of his adversaries. In one word, he acknowledged that he was *maximus* as a political gladiator in that arena, while he was *minimus* as a statesman. If all that was required from a minister, was the faculty of amusing that House by his speeches, he acknowledged his talents; but he recollected the expression of a great Athenian statesman, Themistocles, that “he could not play on a fiddle, but he could make a little city a great state.” The language of the chancellor of the exchequer must be the reverse of this; he could play on his fiddle, and amuse this House, but he had reduced a great empire to be a little state. We judge of a painter, of a statuary, of an architect, by his works. He had read of an architect who had been buried in a church which he had himself erected, with this epitaph, “*Si quæris monumentum, circumspice.*” Would the chancellor of the exchequer wish his character as a statesman to be decided by this test? Could any man say that he confided in the chancellor of the exchequer, from a review of his conduct? Was he a war-minister? Was he a skilful finance-minister? Was he an able negotiator? Beginning the war with all the powers of Europe on his side he had so conducted it that every ally had either abandoned him, or been subdued; while France had been exalted to a power almost beyond the dreams of ambition. View him as a finance-minister:—The funding system exhausted; a paper currency introduced; taxes on consumption no longer

practicable; while recourse is had to a requisition on income. What is he as a negociator? He tells you himself that he has three times attempted to make peace, always sincerely, but always unsuccessfully. View him as a statesman in the late negotiation, I mean at its close, after his paltry intrigue to overturn the French government had failed. He knew that Austria would make a separate peace; he knew that in consequence of that peace France would establish her ascendant in Italy, in the Mediterranean sea, in Spain, in Portugal, in Holland and in Germany. He knew that he had exhausted the funding system; that he could no longer lay his taxes on consumption; that he must have recourse to this new mode of a requisition on income; yet, knowing all this, this great statesman thought it advisable to continue the war for those paltry objects Trinidad, the Cape of Good Hope, and Trincomale.

Mr. *Dickinson* jun. confessed, that at first he disliked the measure, but upon maturely considering the subject, he thought it was the only one that could maintain the dignity, or ensure the security of the country. It had been called unjust and unprecedented. If, indeed, it were unjust, no precedent could sanction it; but until it was proved to be unjust, he must support it. Immediately previous and subsequent to the revolution up to the establishment of the sinking fund, large sums were raised, precisely on this principle; and when the spirit of the revolution was most ardent in the minds of the people, the land tax, taking five per cent, was passed, and commissioners were actually appointed to receive statements upon oath of the property of the subject. At present the question was, whether the House would agree to accept any peace France chose to dictate. As to a new land tax proposed by the hon. gentleman, he conceived it would be a most unjust and ungenerous system of taxation in a country like this, where so large a proportion of the property and means of the people was commercial. It was the fashion for gentlemen to renounce all attachment to, or influence by party, as if it were criminal. If it were criminal, he must submit to the stigma; he had his party affections, but in a case of such importance, he should detest himself if he was influenced by any thing but sterling principle and truth.

Mr. *Simeon* said, that having fairly

compared the possible benefits with the probable evils of the present measure, he had come to a determination against it. He thought the war just and necessary, and that every thing we held dear was at stake, but that could not induce him to vote for a tax which would be oppressive and ineffective. He was aware of the censure and contempt that attached to any man, not being a minister, who proposed any species of taxation; but that should not deter him from doing his duty, and offering to the country a plan which he had for some time had in contemplation. He then proceeded to state the substance of his plan, which was to the following effect: To charge a duty of 5 per cent upon all deviseable property above a certain amount. To charge a duty on all retail tradesmen and dealers; and to make the rent of the house the criterion of property or income, and not to take away above one-fifteenth of the income, after deducting the charges of trade. To charge the transfer of stock with a duty of half a crown in the pound. The produce of it would be nearly double that which would be raised by the present measure. It would not fall short of eight millions and a half; perhaps it might produce ten. It would produce not half the oppression of the plan now before the House.

Mr. *M. P. Andrews* said:—Sir; I have perused the bill in its present form with great attention, and seeing how lightly it will press upon the poorer orders, and the gradual progressive scale which it adopts to meet the circumstances of the affluent, I think it is one of the best measures that could be devised. While it assists the exigencies of the state, it tends to keep up the price of the funds, and support our national credit. The measure is undoubtedly a strong one, but at a crisis like the present, strong measures are necessary. When I look at the inveterate disposition of our enemies, I own I see little or no alternative; we must either manfully exert, or disgracefully prostrate ourselves. The road of war is unfortunately now the only path that is left to us to pursue. Every overture for peace has already been made by this country, consistent, I will not say with its dignity, but its prudence.

Mr. *J. H. Addington* said, that, before he had heard that any such measure as that now under discussion was in contemplation, it had occurred to him, that it would be extremely desirable, if practicable, for

the House to adopt some plan, by which a great part of the supplies might be raised within the year. It seemed of the utmost consequence to give breathing time to public credit; to avoid making a very heavy addition to the national debt in the present state of the funds; to avoid laying permanent taxes to so large an amount to pay the interest of that additional debt, some of which must necessarily affect the lower classes of people; and to convince the enemy that we were in possession of resources, on which, perhaps, they had not calculated. He would not go so far as to say, that this bill was entirely free from objections; but satisfied as he was of the necessity of some such measure, he should give it his support. Some gentlemen thought that the bill did not go far enough; more, that it went too far. Some disliked it on account of its novelty, which was, to him, a strong recommendation of it. In the present crisis, whilst our enemies were enabled by calling forth new means, to make such extraordinary exertions, not to meet those exertions by new and vigorous measures on our part, would be to leave the country to destruction. One gentleman had declared it unjust to make a tax on luxury, as he called this bill retrospective; which, if it was not, it must be unproductive, and of course useless. But it could not be properly called a tax on luxury; it was a general contribution, levied for a limited time, in different proportions, on those who were best able to bear it, according to the fairest criterion that could be found. With respect to the argument of its diminishing consumption, that was equally an objection to any measure, the principle of which was to raise a large supply within the year. A learned gentleman had declared, that he thought the chancellor of the exchequer, who had so long prosecuted the funding system, and had added so largely to the national debt, was the last person who ought to have proposed this plan. Mr. Addington thought this a very good reason why his right hon. friend should feel it to be peculiarly his duty to recommend some deviation from a system, his perseverance in which was supposed to be injurious to the public. It could with more propriety be urged, that those who had been in the habit of emphatically calling the national debt "the best ally of France," should be the last to oppose a measure, peculiarly calculated to defeat the hopes, and to prostrate the reliance

which the enemy might have on so formidable a coadjutor.—The reign of king William had been referred to, as a model for public spirit. He wished it to be considered so. Gentlemen very well knew, that the year after that monarch came to the throne, a land-tax bill had been agreed to, which required one-fifth of every person's property to enable the king to carry on the war. It was, indeed, abandoned, because it was found to be attended with considerable difficulties in the execution. What was the object of that war, and who was the enemy with whom we then had to contend? To preserve the balance of power in Europe; to secure the country, not against a pressing and a most alarming danger, but against one, distant and problematical. The enemy was a prince, certainly of vast ambition, fond of glory and of conquest:—but had no particular antipathy to crowned heads; had never threatened conquered countries with the annihilation of their nobility, the destruction of all their old institutions, the subversion of their established forms of government. Did we want to know the object of the enemy in the present contest? Read their own declarations, and we should find that it was not merely subjugation, but universal plunder; with the exception only of the mutineers in the navy, and the friends of reform, on whose co-operation they foolishly and madly relied. Were he to describe this enemy, he would call them "*Raptores orbis, quibus cuncta vastantibus cum defensu terræ, et mare scrutantur. Si locuples hostis, avari; si pauper, ambitiosi. Quos non oriens, non occidens satiaverit. Qui auferre, trucidare, rapere, falsis nominibus imperium; et ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.*" This was the enemy, to secure ourselves against whose fury we were now called upon to subscribe a sum not exceeding, in any case, a tenth of our incomes. No man lamented, more than he did, that this measure should bear hard on any individual; but let those on whom it pressed, look at the French manifesto; at the speech of the president of the Directory to their favourite general; and their complaints would soon be lost in sentiments of indignation, which he defied any man not to feel who called himself an Englishman.—On the charges of corruption which had been frequently thrown out against the majority of that House, judging of other gentlemen's feelings by

his own, perhaps they might be thought scarcely worthy of notice. He knew the motive of his own conduct, and had no intention of acting by any other. But he would ask those gentlemen on the other side who had uniformly supported their right hon. friend in his opposition to all the measures of the present minister for fourteen years together, during which period, he must have accidentally stumbled on a few, at least, beneficial to the country; how would they be pleased that their conduct should be imputed to a corrupt motive, to the hope of reward, whenever the success of that opposition should enable their friend to bestow it? From him they should never hear any such insinuation, because he thought he had no right to express any such suspicion. He thought they would do wisely to dissuade their friends from throwing out such charges at random, which those who threw out, did not themselves believe.—On the continuance of that firmness which had been so conspicuous during the whole of this arduous contest, the salvation of the country altogether depended.

Mr. *Rose*, jun. said, he approved of the present measure, and therefore it should have his support. He felt great pain at the idea that he should displease any part of his constituents by his conduct, but he considered himself, not merely as the representative of a particular body of men, but as one of the guardians of the interests of the country. Without such a strong measure as the present we should not be able to resist the enemy.

Sir *Francis Burdett* said:—Mr. Speaker; It is not from any vain idea that any thing I can urge will have weight with this House, that I am induced to address you. I have too recently witnessed the little effect that can be produced by the utmost exertions of argument, eloquence, and knowledge. It is, Sir, in order to speak my sentiments to my countrymen, from the only place in which it is any longer permitted to speak them: and no time appeared to me so proper for that purpose as the present, when we are called upon for such extraordinary supplies. I shall not enter into the detail of the bill before the House, as its unjust and tyrannical principle renders every modification of it of little importance. An hon. gentleman says, that by the present mode of raising the supplies, the people will be relieved. I shall endeavour to show the fallacy of

that idea, and to prove that every part of the expenditure of government must in the end fall upon the shoulders of the people. Direct taxes, which frequently raise so much clamour, do not however injure the people. Let me be understood: I mean by their direct operation, because the wages of labour being regulated by the demand for labour, any direct tax upon the labourer, supposing the demand to continue the same, although it may be paid out of the hand of the labourer, must, however, come out of the pocket of his employer. But, the way in which these taxes and all other taxes, and every part of the expenditure of government injure the people, is, by their indirect tendency to decrease the demand for labour, by dissipating those funds which pay the wages of industry. Now, Sir, to illustrate what I am saying, by the bill before you—inasmuch as it falls upon country gentlemen, they can less afford to pay and maintain their servants: inasmuch as it falls upon manufacturers, they can less afford to maintain and employ their workmen; inasmuch as it falls upon farmers, they can less afford to maintain and employ their labourers. The present minister has already made away with above 200 millions of that sacred wages fund, and now a scheme is brought forward to enable him to destroy a still greater portion of the capital of the country, which we are told is not to be felt by the people. I would as soon put faith in an architect who talked of laying an immense weight on the head of a column, without increasing the pressure at the base, as in a financier or political economist, who talked of depriving the rich of their wealth without injury to the poor.—Now, Sir, having shown the fallacy of this mode of reasoning, I shall proceed to treat the present question, not merely as a question of finance: objects of finance, important no doubt in themselves are become of small import in the actual situation of our affairs. Although I perfectly agree with those who think the mode of raising the supplies highly objectionable, yet, were it altogether unobjectionable in itself, I would oppose the granting of the supplies, because I detest the purposes they are intended to promote—the prosecution of this disgraceful war, and the support of an infamous system of corruption; these are the accursed ends for which the people of this country are to groan beneath a load of increased taxes.—The hon. gentleman who

spoke last, said, he would not now speak of the justice and necessity of the origin of the war, nor of the propriety of continuing it, but reserve himself for a proper opportunity; but what opportunity can be so proper as that in which we are called upon for fresh taxes, in order to continue it? Sir, I am not sorry, at this late period, when men, from distress being brought home to their door, are inclined to reflect upon the past, to have an opportunity of saying a few words upon that head. The partakers of the present system of abuses were aware that the establishment of a wise and frugal government in France might possibly infect the people of this country with a desire of seeing their own affairs administered in a like wise and frugal manner. This I sincerely believe to have been the true grounds of that alarm at French principles so industriously propagated by all the connexions of government, who feed upon corruption, and fatten upon the spoils of the people. It was in this point of view, Sir, that French liberty was so hateful to those whose best patrimonies arose out of the corruptions; for this has the minister been exalted to his present Jacobin eminence; for this has he passed decrees that would not have disgraced the most tyrannical code, destructive of that freedom of opinion, once the pride and security of Britons; for this have those laws, so highly prized by our ancestors, for the protection of general freedom, been by him suspended or repealed. Sir, he has placed terror in the throne of reason, and, under the pretence of maintaining the constitution, he has squandered the wealth, he has shed the blood, and he has annihilated the liberties of the people of England. These are the achievements of the right hon. gentleman, and this is the minister, and this the system, we are now called upon to drain the very heart's blood of the country in order to support.—I call upon those country gentleman who have been frightened into a support of the present system, to stand forward at length in support of their country. Would they render their properties secure, let them show by their conduct that they really have a feeling for the interests of the people, and not always exhibit themselves in the odious point of view, of a set of men ever ready to combine against their liberties; let them exert the high privilege to which they were born, and not basely become the tools and minions of that govern-

ment which it is their province to control. And now, Sir, that supplies are demanded, let them, in the wise spirit of their ancestors, demand in their turn that grievances be redressed, and, by bringing down vengeance on the head of the minister who has brought all this ruin on us, prove to the people of England, that there constitution is not a dead letter, but that there is a point, beyond which the most profligate minister cannot with safety advance.—But, Sir, if every feeling which the sacred love of our country should inspire, were altogether extinct within our bosoms, one would think, by this time at least, fatal experience would have taught us the absurdity of entrusting the remaining property of the country to the same hand that has already made away with so large a part of it in the most unjustifiable and ill-conducted projects; that we might by this time at least begin to perceive the error of that modern political maxim (the source, I believe, of our present misfortunes), that money is the sinew of war. Sir, we seem to imagine we have only to assemble within these walls to devise ways and means for extracting large sums of money from the country: then, we are told, we are to be relieved from all our embarrassments, and our enemies struck with terror and dismay. But, Sir, we must first cleanse away those foul corruptions which the present minister has carried beyond any former example; which unnerve every heart and every arm, and deprive us of that vigour and that courage once characteristic of this now-degraded country. Sir, money is not the sinew of war. Were money so all-powerful as most persons, in spite of experience, continue to believe—I say in spite of experience, for the whole tenor of history serves to prove the contrary—the extravagance of our minister would surely have entitled him to every sort of advantage, and the people of France would long ere this have been exterminated, according to the pious intentions of the undertakers of the war, and would now have been held out as a dreadful example to trembling nations, of the danger of incurring royal vengeance; the nature of which may be learnt from the specimen afforded in the infamous conduct of the coalesced kings towards the brave and unfortunate La Fayette. In truth, Sir, as it has been managed, our wealth has been formidable principally to ourselves. By means of the immense revenue raised upon the people of this country, a corrupt minister has

debauched the very spirit of the nation, and prepared us to become slaves, and the proof of it is our want of generosity and spirit, in submitting to become the instrument for enslaving others. For let no man flatter himself that he is not implicated in the guilt of that horrible conduct which the minister has adopted with regard to Ireland, unless he has done all in his power to prevent it. Sir, as the right hon. gentleman did not upon a former occasion set up the disingenuous plea of the independency of the Irish government, I shall consider the measures pursued in Ireland as the measures of the minister; and here his conduct stands unrivalled in the annals of human atrocity, exceeding in cruelty even that of the modern monster Robespierre, inasmuch as the cruelty of inflicting upon men excruciating torture exceeds the cruelty of inflicting upon them immediate death. A noble personage on his return from Ireland made the public acquainted with many instances of savage barbarity; but, Sir, individual instances of barbarity are scarcely worth notice in this stupendous system of cruelty and oppression. I have received information from that country, stating that in the county of Armagh alone, above 4,000 families have been barbarously driven from their homes, that is, have been robbed of their houses and their gardens, under pain of being put to death if they remained. The right hon. gentleman did, I remember, express his regret at having been obliged, as he said, to adopt the measures he has adopted in Ireland. I do believe the right hon. gentleman was sincere in that expression of his regret; not from any sympathy with the unhappy sufferers, not from any compunctious visitings of nature, but because he finds those measures are productive of effects very different to what he had expected. He finds that the people of Ireland are not to be butchered out of a firm determination to emancipate their enslaved country. Let it not be thought, Sir, that what I am now stating is irrelative to the subject before you; it is one feature of that political monster engendered from the corruption of the British constitution; nor are the people of England uninterested in, or ought they to behold with selfish indifference the unheard-of sufferings of the Irish people. It is the nature of despotism to make its root in the extremes, and gradually to spread inwards. This Irish system has already passed over into Scotland. The

same spirit also discovers itself in the government at home. The same principle, though not to the same extent, is acted upon in this country. We have many victims of oppression rotting within the walls of our prisons. Sir, not to intrude too long upon your time, I will content myself with stating one case, not because it is the hardest that can be picked out—I believe the case of that wretched, forlorn, friendless man, Kid Wake, is much harder—but because I happen to be particularly acquainted with the circumstances I am about to mention. A printer of Newark, whose name is Holt,* has suffered a four years' imprisonment, with a heavy fine to be paid before he can obtain his liberty—a fine, which, let me observe by the way, it was utterly impossible a man like him, who earned his daily bread by his daily labour, should of himself ever be able to pay, especially after a four years' imprisonment, and this I take to be highly unconstitutional, as well as the sending him to a prison a hundred miles distant from that of the county where he was tried, which I take also to be a gross violation of the law of the land. I know there will never be wanting lawyers to say that all the prisons are the king's, and that he may send men wherever he pleases; but, Sir, I do not believe this to be the case—not that I pretend to any deep knowledge of the laws of this country, but it is impossible, that in any country where the constitution is supposed to secure any degree of liberty, that such a power should be trusted in the hands of the executive magistrate; for every one must immediately see to what dreadful purposes the abuse of such a power might be, and in the present instance, has been perverted, as it has put the person in question to an additional expense of four or five hundred pounds, besides depriving him of the consolation to have been derived from his wife, his children, and his friends. And, Sir, what is the crime that as thus drawn upon him all the vengeance of government—for vengeance it must be called; it never can be regarded as equitable punishment, even supposing there had been some degree of criminality in the act which he had committed. What was the act? The reprinting resolutions supposed to have been drawn up by the right hon. gentleman himself; but whether drawn up by

* See the Trial of Daniel Holt, in Howell's State Trials, Vol. 22, p. 1189.

him or not, certainly having publicly received his sanction and approbation. I allude to the famous resolutions known by the name of the Thatched-house resolutions. Thus, as every thing in a corrupt system is tainted, the very laws themselves, by the partial execution of them, are forged into instruments of tyranny. Now, Sir, is this justice? Can liberty exist in a country where such practices prevail? But notwithstanding this, the right hon. gentleman will, with a power of face I own I always behold with additional admiration, get up in this House and talk to us gravely of our liberties, and of the blessings we enjoy under our most excellent constitution, and would fain persuade us that there are no difficulties we ought not to submit to, no dangers we ought not to encounter, no extremities we ought not to endure, in order to maintain it—"Speciosa verbis, re inania aut subdola, quantoque majore libertatis imagine tegebantur, tanto eruptura ad infensius servitium." But I do hope the spirit of my countrymen, humble as it is, will at length be roused to a redress of the wrongs they have received. That they will at length shake off the torpid effects of that sleepy drench of corruption, which seems to have benumbed their senses. That they will make one effort at least to wrench their bleeding country from the grasp of these domestic spoilers. The minister has made many bold and wicked strokes to destroy us, let us make one bold and honest stroke to destroy him. Should he, after such repeated treasons—for his whole conduct for these last four years has been one continued tissue of treasons to the people—should he after all, escape with impunity and remain secure in office, then indeed the grand object of this liberticide war will have been completely attained, and government will regard itself as amply recompensed for defeat and disgrace abroad, by a shameful triumph over the liberties of Englishmen at home! Sir, whatever may be the final event of the wicked system pursued by the minister, whether we are tamely and meanly to sink beneath the degrading yoke of military despotism, or to be tossed on the storm of revolution, I shall at least have the satisfaction to think, that I have exerted every little effort in my power in defence of the liberties of the people. Sir, it is not therefore on account of the heavy pressure which this mode of raising the supplies must occasion; it is not on account of the unjust and tyranni-

cal principle of the bill now before you; it is not on account of the waste and extravagance of the government, enormous as it is, that I now raise my voice against granting the supplies demanded by the minister: it is because I never will at any time, or under any circumstances, become an accomplice in the guilt of supporting a system, which, if it can be supported, and is to be persisted in (and if it can it will) must eventually destroy the freedom of my country.

Mr. Alderman *Lushington* said, that the present was not the crisis of a single day, or year, nor was it likely to be terminated when the present war shall be concluded. It was brought on by that awful event, the French revolution—an event more formidable in its nature than any thing we had ever read of in history. It became so from the situation of the people by whom it was accomplished, as well as by their numbers and disposition. We should, therefore, not only look to our own interests, but take care of those of our posterity. It was upon this enlarged ground that he had all along been friendly to the principle of the present bill. All his apprehensions were, that it might press upon the lower orders of the people; but he hoped that had been done away by the modification that had been introduced. Something had been said upon the subject of parliamentary reform. That was a subject to which he was as fast a friend as ever he had been, and he should be glad to see it discussed, but at the present moment he thought that discussion would conduce to anarchy and confusion. It had been said, that if the executive power of this country were placed in other hands, we might obtain peace. He questioned that: for he doubted whether there were in this country any description of men, who, by their address, or by any other talents, could convert so vindictive a foe as that which we have now to contend with, into any thing like an opponent ready to treat with us upon honourable terms. He would go farther, and say, it was contrary to the principles of our enemies, and contrary even to the character of the human mind, that men who had acquired so great and so new a power as our enemies lately had, to act upon just and equitable terms towards its opponents. We must therefore continue the contest. We were like a party who had a suit depending in chancery, who must continue it to preserve his honour, however

fruitless it might be to him, or however tedious and expensive in other respects.

Mr. *Ellison* declared himself a warm friend to the bill, as being a measure calculated to preserve the constitution of this country.

Mr. *Jekyll* said, that the detestable measure of extortion and rapacity now submitted to the House, appeared to him much to resemble, in its attempt at least, other efforts of the chancellor of the exchequer, wherein his arrogance and pertinacity had affected to condemn the unanimous opinions of those whom the House called its constituents. It reminded him of the contemptible conduct of the minister when he dragged through the dirt that execrable majority who supported his infamous measure of the Russian armament, He made them vote with him; and when the public voice without doors thundered its detestation of the project, he instantly abandoned the very measure he had directed them so implicitly to support. It might have been hoped he would have done so in the present instance, and would have obeyed the same unanimous reprobation of his conduct. Amidst his endless incapacities as a statesman, his ignorance of the condition of the various gradations and classes of the community was not the least prominent feature, especially of the middle and inferior orders; what was the nature of their necessities, what was the extent of their ability? Whether this was owing to his own sudden elevation, at an earlier period of human life than gives a thorough knowledge of such a subject, he could not pretend to say, but certain it was he laboured under the peculiar inability alluded to. Of his total ignorance of the middling class of society, he had afforded in this very bill the most flagrant proof. By this harsh and inequitable project of taxation the gentleman of four, five, or six hundred a year would not only be compelled to abandon superfluities and luxuries, but would be deprived of common comforts: his state would be degraded; and if a foreign refuge were open to him, he would be driven into exile. Of the lower class, he was, if possible, still less competent to form the remotest judgment. Witness the pompous speech he made on that subject when he snatched from the hand of an able and intelligent friend of his, now absent (Mr. *Whitbread*) a wise and salutary measure he had offered to that House for the amelioration of the state of the labouring poor;

the speech was swelled with a few general ideas, borrowed from any quarter on the subject: and was celebrated for its eloquence as it was remarkable for its inanity: jealous, and apprehensive that the able and intelligent person who had proposed the original measure should have reaped the applause so justly due to his suggestion, he snatched the subject from his hand, and promised to do something miraculous upon it himself. Months elapsed, and at last this arrogance was ripened into a bill which had as much relation to the speech that had announced it, as it had to the system of the poor, which it purported to revise and reform. The bill was such a farrago of absurdities, that there was not a parish officer in the kingdom who did not turn from the project with disgust. The consequence was, that though the speech stands recorded* as a beautiful display of what may be said without any applicability to the subject in question, the bill was sneaked out of the House in a way that marked the disgraceful manner, the original subject had been wrested out of the hands of its intelligent and honourable author.—With regard to the present monstrous measure, he appealed to those honourable persons within these walls who affected a more than ordinary degree of piety, whether they could consent to the enactment and multiplication of oaths which this bill professed to establish? Whether they would consent to an increase of the incitement to perjury? He would ask all those who were solicitous to preserve the morals of the people, whether they would agree to violate a principle which, he conceived, was the basis of civil polity; namely, a respect for even the lesser virtues practised in the course of human society? Among these, a due economy was surely to be ranked; but the exercise of that virtue was proscribed by the bill. If a man had been profuse and extravagant, to the detriment of his family and his creditors, he must remain so. Retrenchment was rendered impracticable; and, if attempted, was punished as a crime and misdemeanor. What, too, was to be the fruit and produce of this wild and unjust exaction? He was confident that if the tax-gatherers were to be examined at the bar, they would prove to the House, that the new collection would be totally impossible. If this ruinous measure was persisted in, it

* See Vol. 32, p. 705.

would be obvious that the House of Commons had no sympathy with those it professed to term its constituents. It would be a melancholy instance of the deterioration of the principles of the constitution, to see a bill passed by a large majority of the House, when the people without doors had pronounced their unanimous abhorrence of it. It would be an unfortunate manifestation of the fact that there was no mutuality of interest and feeling between the people, and those who were styled their representatives. Should this unjust and tyrannical exaction, as in his conscience he thought it would, tend to alienate the affection of the people from the constitution of this country, it would be more alarming than all the menaces of invasion from the most formidable enemy. The distress and difficulty of the present awful crisis was the natural consequence of such a system as ministers had uniformly persisted in. He would conclude with the memorable words of the right hon. gentleman's illustrious father, pronounced at a period when the national burthen did not amount to 100 millions. "We have suffered ourselves," said that great statesman, "to be deceived by names and sounds: the balance of power; the liberty of Europe; a common cause, and many more such expressions, without any other meaning than to exhaust our wealth, consume the profits of our trade, and load our posterity with intolerable burthens. None but a nation that had lost all signs of virility, would suffer itself to be so treated."

Dr. Laurence said, that after the two learned chancellors of the exchequer whom the House had heard that night; one (Mr. Simeon) in a speech that nicely balanced between both sides of the question proposing a new plan, which was liable to every objection urged against the present bill, and many more; the other, Mr. Jekyll) undertaking to show the total ignorance of the present chancellor of the exchequer in every branch of political economy, by a declamation going back to the speeches of his father and mingled up with every thing but an examination of the bill itself; he feared that a professional man, little qualified as he must always be to speak on a subject of finance, could not expect a very favourable audience. If therefore he had risen, it was merely from a sense of duty at this awful juncture of our fortune, for glory or for shame, for safety or for ruin; a juncture

which in his mind superseded every personal consideration.

The bill, in the preamble of it, professed to be founded on the extraordinary crisis of the country, which required extraordinary efforts. But how had it been constantly argued on the other side? As if we were in the ordinary situation of a common war, as if this was an ordinary measure of revenue; and this he thought a fallacy which had run through every thing said in opposition to it. The exigency of the time had been neither admitted nor denied, but was wholly kept out of sight. He thought, on the contrary, that throughout their deliberations and discussions, they should for ever keep before their eyes the circumstances of the moment to which the measure was intended to apply. What then was the political necessity? For that naturally came first under consideration. He should be as willing as any man to go at any length upon an enquiry into the original justice of the war. But such an enquiry was neither regular nor possible on that day. He should therefore limit himself to what had passed, to show the real character of the war, since the commencement of the present session. Without examining the whole train of the late negotiation, thus much was clear, that it was broken off by the French with a demand, that we should as a preliminary subscribe to their laws and their treaties. And what sort of treaties? Full of secret articles which they had never communicated to us. Was there any man in this country who had ever ventured to state such a demand as admissible? Would it not be a direct surrender of our independence? What then followed this insolent demand? A proclamation, in which the Directory promises that the great nation, as they now commonly style France, will avenge the universe by a descent upon this island. Their army of England is to dictate terms of peace in London! Here, wherever this pleasant intelligence was obtained, they are to find as auxiliaries the whole Irish nation; here they are to find those thousands of generous men who have struggled so long for (what he never would call, though others might) a parliamentary reform; and here also they are to find those innumerable mechanics whom the continuance of the war reduces to misery. He had seen, in a subsequent paper, a saving clause of indemnity for the glorious opposition, who had so long spoken and

voted for peace. He mentioned this for the sake of declaring his conscientious persuasion that it was a gross calumny and libel on the characters of those gentlemen; as he trusted also that the enemy would meet with comparatively few indeed of those auxiliaries, upon whom they reckoned in their denunciations of vengeance against this island.

When that proclamation was issued, it was the stale device of the Directory, by an affected pity for the supposed distresses of our mechanics, to divide the trading interest from the government of the country. Observe, however, what has lately taken place at Paris. A deputation from the commune, a Jacobin magistracy appointed under the influence of the Directory, was brought forward to demand the opening of a loan, which should be secured on the conquest of England; and in this step they believed themselves to be the organ of the merchants of Paris. How far they were likely to be so acknowledged, or the loan to be filled, he should not trouble himself to conjecture. Our business was with the sentiments which they then declared. And what was one of the crimes imputed to England, by the director Barras? Why truly, that through her insinuations, France had been accused of not sustaining this war for the object of extending and preserving commerce. Will then an hon. baronet (sir F. Burdett) contradict the citizen president, by persisting to denominate this a liberticide war, a war to prevent the establishment of a wise and frugal government in France? It was admitted on that occasion by our enemies, that they do not believe us to seek their destruction, but they loudly proclaimed that they will not suffer us to exercise what they describe as the tyranny of the seas; the ocean (they tell us) ought to carry their glory, their arts, and industry to all parts of the world and would groan to be subjected to a few proud islanders; all the merchants of France have long and cruel injuries to revenge, and will burn to say "we have also given our blow." This pretended tyranny of England over the seas is now the burden of their song to lull Europe, while they are aiming a death blow at our naval power; and in a paper published under the patronage of the Directory (he had it he believed, in his pocket, but would not trouble the House with reading it), he had seen the same deadly hatred expressed in still more

furious and unmanaged terms. Ten ages of barbarity and treasons, it was said, against thirty nations oppressed and scourged by the audacity of a single people (how the ages or the nations were reckoned he did not know), were to be now visited on our devoted heads. He had necessarily, in the course of his profession, read much upon the subject, and if the hon. baronet or any other person of his sentiments, that dared to call himself an Englishman, would maintain this also, as many of them do maintain the other injurious aspersions perpetually thrown out from the same quarter against their country; Dr. Laurence said, he would undertake to show, that never did any nation, possessing maritime power, exercise it with so much systematic lenity as England at all times had done.

But the ambition of our enemies has now thrown off all disguise. They have declared against the naval power, the constitution, and the people of England, an *internecine* war, which no man in this country ever declared against France: though some men early thought that the principles of their revolution would infallibly make it that war which they have now avowed it to be. Their view from the beginning was to break in pieces the system of Europe, which has ever been principally preserved by the German empire and Great Britain. They feared at first to provoke a contest with both; they wished to begin with that which was the weaker, and at their own door. They tried every art to prevent the king of Prussia from joining the Emperor, and afterwards to detach him from that alliance. On his retreat, growing bold with success, they ventured upon hostilities with this country, and they now hope that they have an opportunity of crushing us for ever, so as to prevent us from appearing again at the head of any confederacy for vindicating the liberties of Europe. They would strike at our empire through our commerce, knowing them mutually to support each other, and they would annihilate our constitution as the foundation of both.

Such was in his judgment the political necessity for prosecuting the war with vigour. It was next to be considered, what is the pecuniary necessity for adopting this new mode of raising the supplies, if not within the year, yet in as short a time as possible, without finding any considerable part, so as to become an additional

burthen to the common stock-market. On this branch of the question, we should never forget what had been the resources of the French republic for carrying on her projects of ambition; resources incalculable before the experiment, because they were such as never were, and never can be, possessed by any regular government. They made by their constitution every citizen a soldier, and by subsequent laws subjected all, from the age of eighteen to five and thirty, who upon public requisition did not actually join the army, to be capitally punished as deserters. To drive forward this vast machine, they possessed themselves of all the property of the kingdom; they seized on ninety-nine parts in a hundred of all the landed estates; they had all the domains of the crown; they had nearly all the property of every kind belonging to the nobility and gentry, whom they proscribed, massacred, or forced into exile; they had all the glebe of the church, and even the lands settled for the maintenance of hospitals, and other charitable institutions. When this great mass began to fail, they seized at pleasure on the produce of the farmers to supply their armies; they laid their hands on the goods of the manufacturers and merchants, paying for them at an arbitrary valuation, by a depreciated paper currency, and carried on the trade of the country for the profit of the state; a fact that appeared on the documents of ships which had been taken. At the same time they arrested all the principal bankers, compelled them to produce their books, and give bills of exchange for every shilling due to them from their foreign correspondents. He knew a family which without being at any time suspected, so as even to be imprisoned, out of several hundred thousand pounds, retained only twenty thousand, which precious relic was secured to them in this country by the fortunate operation of the traitorous correspondence bill. Yet notwithstanding these heaps, accumulated by every sort of rapine and injustice, they had a taxation the most grinding and oppressive that ever was invented. Landed proprietors paid one-sixth of their nett income, with twenty-five per cent upon that, besides taxes upon their houses, horses, carriages, and servants. He should afterwards have occasion to state the burthens which the wise and frugal government of the hon. baronet had laid, most analogous to those of the present bill.

When we had to meet so formidable a
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strength of every kind, not to mention the enhanced price of every article, it could not be a matter of surprise, if our expenditure had been swelled beyond the amount of any former war; and without meaning to give any opinion on the details, whether in them there had been profusion or economy, he thought that the circumstances of the contest itself would sufficiently account in general for the rapid accumulation of our public debt. Happily the war found us with as unexampled an accumulation of floating capital: and from that stock, and from the annual increase upon it, while many millions had been expended in improving the soil, and facilitating the inland navigation far beyond what had been done in any former period of equal duration; while, equally beyond all precedent, the value of our exports had risen no less than six millions; we had funded in four years, up to the end of 1796, about one-third more than in five years of the American war. What then was the natural result of these new and mighty, but indispensable efforts? The price of our funds had subsided a little below the mark to which they had formerly sunk in the close of the year 1781: below that point which was the highest level of the general money market, when the public securities afforded an interest just equal to that above which the laws of the country do not allow private persons to advance. In this state of things another heavy loan was found inevitable, and in consequence of this additional pressure, joined to the political events of the continent, the funds had been lowered to a price which had now begun actually to establish that monopoly of borrowing by government, which an hon. gentleman, on a former night, had incorrectly stated to have existed for two years past. The effect was now sensibly felt throughout the landed, the commercial, and the manufacturing interests of the country. If the disadvantage should continue under which every individual who wanted to borrow money at present laboured, still more if it should be augmented by a new loan being brought in the usual way into the market, mortgages, bonds, private securities of every kind would be called in, the disposition of monied capital would be every where unsettled; the whole floating wealth of the nation would be poured through one channel into the vast reservoir of the public debt. And this evil would be more quickly per-

ceived now than it would have been at any former period, from the increased faith of the people in government securities, since the funds had stood so many shocks which had been predicted to be fatal to them; and from the greater extent of our banking system and paper credit, by which the savings of avarice are brought into circulation and activity, but which, in consequence of that very extent, if they are essentially affected in any one part, are more easily deranged in all, because there do not remain behind the same private hoards which may be dragged forward to supply any unexpected emergency. It was this which struck his mind much more forcibly than any loss to the state from borrowing on usurious terms, or the injury which the present stockholders would suffer from the deterioration of their property; this, in his opinion, if we persevered in the old mode of funding, would bring much more serious inconvenience and confusion to the affairs of all classes, than any supposed hardship of the present bill; and he trusted he should be supported by all those who last year thought the public debt to be the most formidable ally of the French republic. He did not like abstract propositions in politics; he neither approved nor condemned the funding system universally. He considered it wise to avail ourselves of it while we fairly might; he should consider it equally wise to have recourse to it again, when from a temporary cessation, and the effect of the sinking fund, it had recovered the true level.

In what manner then, were the immediate exigencies of the state to be met by an adequate provision? As the supplies were to be raised, in point of principle, within the year, or in fact, within as short a time beyond the year as was possible, consistently with the reasonable ease of the subject, he conceived that they should be drawn not from property, but from income. Now what were the different kinds of income? That which arises from landed estates,—from money vested in public or private securities—from money employed in trade and commerce—or from industry and skill, whether employed in occupations that principally exercise the body, the hand, or the mind; though an hon. and learned gentleman to whom he had before alluded, in speaking on this subject the other night, rather unkindly forgot the profession which he had relinquished. There could be no doubt that

in raising a contribution upon income, which was the true nature of the present measure, the pressure of the burthen should be diffused as equally over all, as a regard to the general welfare of the community would permit. But here occurred the great and in his mind, the insuperable difficulty. Without recurring to France, the history of our own country furnished sufficient materials to guide our judgment. In the long parliament, those men, whose early conduct certainly deserved approbation, however he might detest the lengths to which they were afterwards carried, had recourse to a voluntary, which they soon converted into a forced, contribution, of no less than one fifth of every man's income throughout the realm, for the support of their unjust war against the king; then came a demand of a twentieth; then came the amount of one day's meal in a week; then came various other vexations, till the whole ended in the most corrupt and rapacious tyranny, under which this country ever groaned. On the other hand, under William 3rd, when a general contribution was attempted, by the measure in which originated the present land-tax bill, what was the consequence? Personal property, as well as real, was subjected to it, but could never be levied on the former, though the Commons of that day, who are usually thought to have been neither deficient in a knowledge or a love of true liberty, did not consider the principle as arbitrary and unconstitutional; for then, as one of them observed, on occasion of some warm debates, "they, differed as to their ways, but all agreed in keeping out the French." In truth, it was impracticable to find any rule of absolute equality between different classes, and different individuals of the same class, without compelling a direct disclosure in the first instance, which was in itself an act of a very harsh nature, and scarcely to be warranted by any imaginable extremity in a commercial country. There was no other expedient, where a great contribution was requisite, than to apportion it by some visible and voluntary standard (or rather many concurring standards) of income, and to give subsequent relief, where that standard should be shown to be incorrect: and that as he viewed it, was the true description of the present bill.

Of what nature was the opposition to this bill? What were the exceptions taken against it? One said it was a con-

tribution on property; another that it was a tax upon income; a third declared against it as a tax upon industry, and a fourth called it down-right confiscation. At one time it was objected, that it would lean too much on the lower orders of society; then, on looking at the exemptions and abatements, it was found that the middling ranks would be most aggrieved: and now since the new modifications, that the rich would too much suffer. He had seen it argued in popular writings, that the poor would pay nothing, and the rich too little, and yet both the rich and the poor would be ruined; that non-consumption agreements should be recommended, that non-consumption agreements were to be feared, and that non-consumption agreements were impracticable. The opponents of the measure seemed to be throwing forth arguments of every sort to suit different tastes, in hopes that some might succeed, though many more might fail: they were firing random shot; it was sufficient if one hit a weak place, though hundreds might traverse each other in every direction and fall on every side of the mark. One hon. gentleman who, he believed, was bred to the law, and professed to have a general retainer (Mr. Tierney) seemed to him to have very much weakened the authority of his clients. He had originally described them as poor retail-traders, unable to bear the additional load of this contribution; but no sooner had the modifications been intimated, than he changed his tone, and said, that though his constituents might not directly suffer, all their customers of a higher order would be ruined; at the same time, not pretending any authority from those customers who must live amongst his clients, to make any such representation of their apprehensions. For his own part, Dr. Laurence said, he respected every class of the people alike, according to their several means of information, but he looked to each with confidence only for the knowledge of their own particular grievances; he should always hear with very diminished satisfaction, those, whoever they might be, who took under their protection others that did not complain for themselves; and he had observed with peculiar gratification, that they who were supposed more especially to represent the higher classes of society in that House, had been least adverse to the bill. The country was by no means so unanimous against it, as had been for ever assumed on the other side,

especially since the modifications had been known; on the contrary he had received private accounts on which he could depend, that whole neighbourhoods had been reconciled to it, and many more admitted in general the necessity of the times, and the wisdom of meeting that necessity with vigorous measures. Another learned gentleman who had just spoken, had called upon the religion of an hon. member (Mr. Wilberforce) to oppose the oath. He congratulated his learned friend (as he could once have called him, and hoped he still might) on his new piety; but he did not think it quite candid or parliamentary to make such applications to the private opinions of any individual. If the learned gentleman had done his duty in attending the committee, he would have heard the arguments which had been urged on that head by the hon. member to whom he alluded, as well as the answers which induced him, if not to retract, at least to desist from pressing his scruples against the sense of the majority. At any rate it was rather singular that the topic should be renewed by a professional man, who above all others must have been sensible, in the course of his practice, how difficult it was with all his ability in cross-examination, to keep any sufficient check upon fraud, and who might therefore have been expected to be the last man that would propose the removal of the principal barrier which the wisdom of the law had been able to discover, and which was perpetually applied in transactions of far inferior moment.

The other learned chancellor of the exchequer who had spoken that night, had alone acted fairly in offering his own plan to the House. Without examining whether his mode of assessing tradesmen by the house-rent did not exactly fall under the original objections to the bill itself, it must be remarked, that one great branch of his scheme was, to lay a stamp-duty, which he did not think contrary to public faith, on every transfer of stock. Now the transferable quality of that kind of government security was one chief inducement to the purchaser, and was always understood by every subscriber to a loan; whatever therefore lessened it in any degree, was in so much a departure from the implied engagement of the bargain. But all sides of the House agreed that the national faith ought to be rigidly kept in regard to the stockholder. Indeed a right

hon. gentleman had actually objected to the present measure, as indirectly injurious to that faith. This seemed, however, to be a little too nice. The bill did not enter into the details of any man's income, but took his visible expenses about his own person and household, as a presumption which he had himself afforded of his having some income or other of a certain magnitude; nor if he appealed for relief, on a statement of his income, was he at all compelled to disclose from whence the different parts of that income accrued.

When such had been the leading objections, and such the only other plan which had been proposed, Dr. Laurence said, he should not enter into a minute examination of the bill itself. Its principle had scarcely been touched on the other side: most of the objections not already noticed by him, had in fact consisted of particular cases, which were represented as so many hardships under the details of the bill, and which therefore should rather have been brought forward in the committee, though unfortunately few of the objectors had attended there, to benefit the House by their information. Many modifications, notwithstanding, had been introduced, which some might perhaps be inclined to regard as deviations from the original principle; but which he considered only as better means of carrying that principle more fully and accurately into effect. Wherever it had appeared that the standard generally taken did not apply to any certain class of individuals, so as to afford a probable measure of their income, exemptions or abatements had been allowed; and especially the rate of assessment on two large classes in cities and great towns, had been very considerably moderated. He was not sure that a more precise rule, in some subordinate parts, might not have been drawn, but he was satisfied that the bill as it now stood, would, upon the whole, be more favourable to one of those large classes engaged in trade. Much of the burthen had been shifted from them to persons of higher condition, and wisely too, in his opinion. They who possessed only what civil society had taught us to reckon among necessities, could less bear to lose any certain proportion, than such as could command the conveniences of life; they who had nothing beyond those conveniences could less submit to any diminution, than such as enjoyed the elegancies

of life also: and it was a much less hardship to pass from an establishment of luxury to an establishment of elegance, than to be reduced from what is elegant to what is merely convenient. There was besides another maxim, of which a statesman should never lose sight: it is of the highest expedience for the general good of the community, to take every method of encouraging habits of industry, and to protect them in the first steps of acquisition; for whatever is left in such hands, is the spring of so much more productive wealth to the nation. He should therefore be better pleased if the effect of the alterations should be found to be, as he believed it would, that very many of that description would now escape lightly, who were able to have born a greater proportion of the weight, than if under the original scheme, as many had been obliged to struggle with too heavy a load. Did he then think the standard, as it now had been adjusted, to be absolutely perfect? Certainly not. But small objections to a great measure, in a case of great necessity, ought not to prevail; and if considered all together it was good, if it was even better than any thing proposed to be substituted, he was bound to give it his support. We must so take the character of every thing in life, from the general result of the whole, not from partial exceptions: and it was the observation of an illustrious statesman, now no more, whose wisdom on earth most nearly approached (if any thing mortal could be said at all to approach) that supreme wisdom which it is now his eternal happiness to contemplate, that an ingenious mind, letting the imagination loose, might find it not difficult to criticise the creation itself. There was however, one clause inserted by the committee, which he could not but look upon as an excrescence foreign to the body, and injurious to its health: he alluded to the clause which authorized a voluntary contribution. He thought this was a little at variance with the principle of the measure, since it seemed to imply an admission that the public wisdom of the state was after all unable to find a sufficient standard, and was therefore forced to leave it to the private discretion of individuals. He feared too that it might give scope to some of the worst passions, and teach men to put their hands in the pockets of their neighbours instead of their own, by judging for others what they ought to contribute; a disposition which he had reason, from his

correspondence, to think was already beginning to manifest itself in the country.

They who differed from him in their sentiments of the bill would, he trusted, fairly face the exigence of the times, and the question of that day. In his opinion the question had never been fairly put. We should not inquire whether the reason of the legislature, or the nature of the only criterion which could be found, has favoured any of our fellow subjects more than ourselves; each man should consult his own duty, and seriously ask himself, whether more is demanded of him than his stake in the honour and independence of his country is worth? That, he contended, was the fair mode of putting the question. Let the landed proprietors reflect that they were very little able to seek new means of livelihood in any of the ordinary occupations, and that, if forced to fly, they do not, like the Greek philosopher, carry every thing with them in their own persons. Let all of the commercial interest remember, that the avowed aim of the enemy is to annihilate the source of our opulence and power in our trade. Let those from whom our enemies expect a kind welcome to our coasts, beware in time, lest while they open their arms for the fraternal embrace, they clasp the wife of Nabis to their bosoms. Let none of us forget that the French Directory has opened a loan on the credit of their plunder in this country; that they have proclaimed their determination to exact from us the ransom of Europe and the indemnity of the whole war: and that, to inflame the spirits of their soldiers with the expectation of pillage, they almost literally describe our streets as paved with gold. Then let any man answer, whether what he will have to pay under the present bill can be more than a feather in the scale weighed against that which would assuredly be extorted from him if we should now be wanting to our own just defence. But suppose, instead of this, they should treat us only as their most favoured allies, the Dutch, whom they have taken under their protection: what has recently happened in that republic after Batavian rescription on rescription? Since the glorious victory for which we have lately offered up our solemn thanks to the Almighty Disposer of events, they have laid a direct tax of one-eighth part on all the property of the nation. Suppose still more, suppose there may be righteous men enough found in this kingdom to intercede for us,

and pacify the resentment of the great nation; suppose that we obtain as good terms as the people of France; let us look at that wise and frugal government which the hon. baronet seems to regret that we have not imitated here. He did not mean to adduce any novel oppression under the present free constitution, or any exploded instance from the reign of Robespierre; he would refer to that system of taxation which had been preserved by all, but which had been the favourite work of the first assembly, who undertook to realise the dreams of the economists, and astonish the world with a faultless monster of perfection. In the present tyrannical bill, all who are not now assessed one pound a year to the house and window taxes, are wholly exempted; but under the wise and frugal government of France there is no exemption whatever to the poorest. The man who pays four and nine-pence half-penny to the house tax, and whose whole income they estimate only at eight pounds a year, pays no less than seven and eleven-pence to a permanent contribution on personal property, estimated by the house rent. He who there pays four and twenty shillings to the house tax, pays two pounds to the permanent contribution, while an Englishman under the same circumstances will pay by this bill, no more than six shillings for the short period of two or three years. Thus their scale proceeds, the personal tax always bearing the proportion of five to three on a comparison with the house tax, and keeping constantly above ours till it passes the mark of ten pounds for the house tax, when through the rest of the gradations, their contribution on income becomes comparatively lighter on the higher orders, than ours by the scale imposed in the present bill. If we recur to income, the result was nearly the same. Ours throughout is to be a nett income proved by the oath of the person, and all who have not sixty pounds are wholly exempted; they have no exemption, and the income is understood to be a gross income estimated without appeal from the house rent according to a most capricious and arbitrary classification. He hardly believed, that with this explanation, the people of England would be over-fond of exchanging the ignorance and profusion of their present rulers, for the wisdom and frugality of the hon. baronet. The general ability of the country to make this extraordinary provision, and much more than this, for the prosecution of the present just

and necessary war was, in his mind, indubitable, when he recollected what had been proved in the last session to the House; that a new capital to the amount of eleven millions at least, and he would himself venture to say, to a much greater amount, was annually flowing into the kingdom. Yet the fact must not be disguised. The measure before the House would indisputably fall hard upon some individuals; the burthen to all would be much greater than they had ever felt in any one year; it was, without reference to our increased means of bearing it, actually much greater than our ancestors had ever sustained. When therefore the people of England were called upon to support such an additional weight with fortitude, they had a right in return to expect energy and spirit in the counsels of their rulers. It had been said that we had no hope but in a total change of system: he would not say that; but he thought it time that some system should be adopted and steadily pursued; that we should make, not suffer war.

It was impossible but that there must exist the most serious discontents in France. The unhappy people of that country must be ready to hail us as their deliverers. They must be eager to join the standard of any adequate force which we might send, and to fight by our sides for their liberties. For what had lately been done there? A majority of the people had been actually disfranchised at one stroke of the pen; not only their elections of representatives set aside, but all their magistrates, municipal officers, judges and juries, throughout the greater part of their territory at once dismissed; the leaders in their public councils arrested, imprisoned, and transported without any form or pretence of a trial; and the proprietors, editors, and writers of all their most popular journals subjected to the same arbitrary sentence; a proceeding, which he would recommend to the serious attention of those, who complained that the freedom of the press is extinguished in England. He had seen in one of the last Paris papers, that they had again resorted to this tyrannical severity, against another unfortunate journalist who had presumed to suspect, that they intended to molest some of their weaker neighbours, not yet swallowed up in their republic. They had themselves proclaimed the sense of the country to be against them; for they had justified their late violences by

asserting that public opinion had been corrupted. But even if no effectual impression could be made, the best way to prevent their invading us, would be to keep them in perpetual alarms by attacks upon different parts of their coast. That was one principal use of a superior fleet. With this advantage, he should suppose it feasible, that an army of twenty or thirty thousand men might harass the whole of the hostile force with marches and counter-marches from one extremity of their dominions to the other.

A gallant officer, whose peculiar style of eloquence often enlivened the councils of a neighbouring kingdom, held it, he had been told, as a favourite maxim, that "the best way to avoid danger was to meet it;" and for his own part, Dr. Laurence said, the rhetorical figure in which it was conveyed, only impressed more deeply on his memory the sound sense and important truth of the sentiment; it was the best standing rule of policy for every great state, in times of difficulty like the present. Offensive war was the cheapest and most efficacious mode of defence. All history bore testimony to it. Whenever there had been any thing like a deadly feud between two powers, if either of them confined itself to mere defence, and passively waited the attack of the other, the ruin of that power had surely followed. Our enemies were constantly holding up the examples of Rome and Carthage. They had publicly done so, in bringing forward their present loan upon England. The House too had several times heard arguments illustrated from the same portion of history, and in the discussion of this very bill, it had supplied a quotation to an hon. gentleman, who had from thence inculcated the duty of chief magistrates to take the lead of the senate, and the senate of the people, in providing for the extraordinary emergencies of the state; though it did not come with the best grace from that hon. gentleman, who had declared that he would never give one single sixpence of his general retainer, during the continuance of the present administration. Dr. Laurence said, that he did not mean to rely upon any one particular passage, but to instance the entire course and train of those events, which held forth so striking a lesson to mankind. Why did Rome triumph? Why did Carthage fall? Because Rome bore to see Hannibal at her gates; because Carthage would not bear

to see from her walls Scipio desolating Africa. The spirit of the former was shown in the sale of the very field on which Hannibal lay encamped, at the customary price of peace. The only dispute between her opposite parties was about the mode of conducting the war. It was the soul of all their policy not to despair. Never was the character of that victor-people so finely displayed as by him who best understood it, by him whom the historian of his country styles the fated, the destined, the providential general of the war, by Scipio, when he first harangued that army at the head of which his father and uncle had recently perished; which would have been annihilated but for the bold and vigorous promptitude of a private soldier; and which no Roman officer of rank and eminence would offer himself to command. It was the destiny which heaven itself had allotted to Rome, he said, that in all her great wars she should make her way to victory through defeat. He ran over her history, from the foundation of the republic to the calamities of that war and Hannibal thundering at her gates: then in as magnificent a personification as ever was created by human fancy, he pointed out to them the virtue of the Roman people, standing alone, entire, and unshaken, amidst the wreck of all things; raising, sustaining, and exalting whatever Hannibal had dashed to the ground. "*In hac ruinâ rerum stetit una integra atque immobilis virtus populi Romani: hac omnia strata humi erexit ac sustulit.*" By this spirit it was that all the conduct of that great man was animated. By this he three times saved his country. But in what was it that he most showed the vigour of his mind? In proposing and undertaking the invasion of Africa, while Hannibal was still unvanquished in the heart of Italy.—On the other hand, what was the failure of Carthage? She was prosperous while she attacked, but she was distracted by intestine divisions. There was in her senate an eloquent man, at the head of a strong party, who envying Hannibal's glory, from the beginning called aloud for peace, and resisted all supplies. In the very career of success, nothing saved Hannibal from irretrievable ruin, but the rashness of Varro, in offering him battle at Cannæ, when the Carthaginian army was in want of every necessary, in a state of mutiny, and on the point of disbanding. Hanno still persisted; at length he prevailed. The

senate, trembling at the approach of Scipio, thought only of collecting an immense army for their home defence, while Hannibal urged them still more powerfully to press the war against Rome itself. Then the reinforcements and supplies which he demanded were denied; then he was compelled to abandon his best strength, the Italian allies; then with a weakened, baffled army, he was recalled to oppose the victorious force of Scipio; he displayed his most consummate courage and skill; he was beaten; and Carthage received the dictates of the conqueror. She surrendered her naval power, she surrendered her political independence, she stipulated to pay an enormous ransom; but when the first instalment came to be levied, the people put on public mourning. Then it was that Hannibal laughed that bitter laughter which they reproved; but which he converted into a more just reproof on the folly of their too late repentance, and predicted to them from immutable principles of policy, the still greater calamities to which their degradation would open a way. They became impatient of the galling yoke, tempted their fate, and in the conclusion of another war, were told "you must deliver up your whole fleet." What now? "You must bring in your arms; they cannot be wanted by men who sincerely wish peace." They were brought. "You must now have fortitude to bear what further the senate decrees; choose habitations where you will; Carthage must be razed to the ground."

He had been represented the other night, when a heavy indisposition prevented him from taking notice of it, as having prophesied a war for fifteen years to come. He had uttered no such opinion, because he did not entertain it: he too well knew the exhausted state of our enemies to believe them capable of continuing it for five years: but he would not so libel the people of England as to imagine it possible that they would not with the same constancy, which other nations have shown in other times, support a war not of fifteen but of fifty years, rather than submit to disgrace, servitude, and indeed utter annihilation as a people. There had lately prevailed a new mode of courting popularity, by ridiculing every notion of English fortitude, and preaching pusillanimity. If that could succeed; if the people should once think that a recommendation to their favour, it would not be

in human wisdom, and human power, he had almost said it would not be even in omniscience and omnipotence to save them; it could not be done without suspending and for a time inverting the moral order of the world.—He did not like to talk of his own personal motives, but he trusted that he should be excused if he shortly alluded to them, when every man who supported government in this arduous contest, was openly accused of being influenced by unworthy considerations. He held his integrity as high as that of any man. He looked for no honours, and no emoluments of public life; he did not wish for eminence as a political character. He had never sought the high distinction which he enjoyed, and which he knew how to value, of a seat in that House. He even hesitated about accepting so momentous a charge, and diligently examined his heart before he entered those doors. He had now ventured to deliver his sentiments; because being firmly persuaded that our only safety lay in a vigorous prosecution of the war, he thought it incumbent upon him not to shrink from taking his part in the most unpleasant duty of that House; he, therefore, in the face of his country, declared his hearty approbation of the bill, as judging it from sincere conviction, to be a necessary measure, and if not absolutely necessary, yet expedient and wise, since it gave us the best chance of existence, in a way which could alone make existence not only honourable to a great nation, but even tolerable.

Sir *Francis Burdett* explained. He did not say that the government of France was wise and economical; but that at the beginning of the revolution, the fear of such a government being established in that country, was the original cause of the enmity entertained against the revolution by men who lived upon corruption.

Mr. *Courtenay* could not approve of the coarse invective with which the French government and all their measures were treated by the learned gentleman. Such language was more becoming the poissardes of Paris than the dignity of that House. Nor was there more force in the learned gentleman's arguments in favour of the bill, than there was liberality in his language. He confessed that it affected the rich, the poor, and the middle classes of society and by this confession he must admit, that all descriptions of persons were unanimous in reprobating

it. The learned gentlemen seemed desirous to prepare transports and every necessary, again to march to Paris under the command of the noble lord (*Hawkesbury*), and to renew the triumphs of our *Henries* and our *Edwards*. His language was glowing and warlike. His object was, "*Ære ciere viros, martemque accendere cantu.*" As to the tax, its principle was neither just nor equitable. It would bear hard on all classes of the community, and it could not be raised unless enforced by military power.

Mr. *Bryan Edwards* said, that the will of the people was decidedly against the measure, and he could not see how parliament could be supposed to represent the people while it disobeyed their instructions. It was a measure which created apprehension and dismay. It was destructive to property, and to every thing that tended to make trade and commerce prosper. That it would be attended with these mischievous consequences was universally felt, and therefore it was universally opposed.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, that an hon. gentleman opposite had wished a system of vigour to take place, by which wish he seemed to insinuate, that a system of vigour had not yet taken place, but that it remained to be adopted. The hon. gentleman had recommended them to look their country in the face. In this opinion he perfectly coincided, and that he might look his country in the face, he would give his negative to the question. After a conviction of the minister's incapacity to carry on the war, by the failure of his various systems of finance, by the general defeat of his design, and by the total distress and ruin which now threatened the country, how was it possible for any man to confide longer in his promises, or hope for more success? Was there ever a person who, when he had seen another reduce his country to the most calamitous state, and found him still obstinately persisting in the same ruinous measures to redeem it would continue his confidence and support? In order to prophecy of the future, he had recourse to the experience of the past. In reviewing the navy, whether individual officers or commanders, he was happy to join the general voice of the people in acclamations of praise; but to the naval administration of the country that praise was denied; for earl *St. Vincent* had derived his merit, not from their aid and exertion, but from his own bravery

in fighting a superior fleet. If he considered the grand objects of the war, whether the death of the king of France, the opening of the Scheldt, or the restoration of order and government were assigned, he could find only one single actual object, which was, the accumulation of empire to the British dominions. Would any man say, we had reduced the power of France? Would any man pretend to say, that any of our leading objects were obtained? Our allies had dropped off one after the other. The stadtholder remained under the protection of this country, and there was not one point in which we had been successful. Had we not been the cause of contempt, disgrace, and ruin to every state to whom we had officiously offered our protection, and could we then presume to flatter ourselves, that by a perseverance in the same principles and conduct our condition would be better? It was true we had been successful in the East Indies, but these successes conduced very little to the benefit of this country; for no other nation now at war with us had thought it worth their while to endeavour to resist them. We had been successful in the West Indies also. But at what a rate had we bought our acquisitions! The modifications in the bill had certainly done away many of the objections of those classes of people upon whose rank and condition of life it evidently pressed too much; but notwithstanding this, the main pressure and injustice still existed; inasmuch as it was wrong to rate the income of 300*l.* per annum gained by trade, or other precarious and fluctuating means, with the 300*l.* per annum gained by the produce of a permanent and regular landed interest. The mode by which relief was to be obtained, too, was equally exceptionable; for no greater injury and insult could be offered any man than to compel him to make a declaration upon oath of his annual amount of income.

Lord *Hawkesbury* said, that if he were minutely to examine every circumstance during the war, he was ready to confess that the hon. gentleman might occasionally find authorities to differ from him. But how was it possible to guard against every accident which might happen in a war of such an uncommon nature? The hon. gentleman contended that we had not been able to diminish the power of France. What! Was not the defeat and capture of a great part of her

navy, together with those of her allies, a diminution of her power? Did not the capture of her colonies, with those of her allies, diminish her power? And had not her power been diminished by the ruin of her commerce? It was ridiculous to hear of such perverseness. If the whole of these misfortunes had been turned against us instead of the enemy, he should be glad to know what would the opinion of the hon. gentleman have been of our situation? In regard to the West Indies, he certainly entertained some doubt whether the acquisitions were to every person so desirable as might originally appear. But what would have been the situation of our colonies if they had not been captured? He admitted that in the event of the continental war he had been greatly disappointed. Was any blame, however, to be imputed to the government for the failure of that war? Assuredly not. Government had performed their duty honourably; but the other members of the confederacy were either negligent or perverse; and we shared in the general effects of their misconduct. He, for one, had been sanguine formerly in the success of a continental war. Why that success was not obtained was not the question now to be discussed. An hon. gentleman had asked, whether there ever was a person who, after a minister had reduced his country to the most calamitous state, would continue to repose confidence in him? In reply to this, he should only observe, that there were many occasions in which, if such a language had been used, it would have been fatal to the country. What would have been the result, if, in the rebellion of 1745 when the enemy was actually in the kingdom, he had advised ministers to throw up their power into the hands of the Jacobites? By the firmness of the country, and by the firmness of parliament at that important crisis, the country was saved; and he had no doubt of similar success at present, if the same steadiness and perseverance were observed.—It was assumed by those who spoke against the bill, that a general discontent throughout the country still prevailed against it. As no petition against taxes could be received during the first year of their imposition, he had no certain mode of ascertaining the truth of the assertion. But he doubted the fact. Thus far he was ready to allow, that the great mass of the people might complain of the additional burthen; for a popular tax was

never heard of. It was impossible, therefore, not to suppose, that some murmurs would be vented; but he could not believe, that, taking the country throughout, more objections would be found against it, than against any other burthen. Nay, many places had approved it.

On the motion of the chancellor of the exchequer, the debate was adjourned till to-morrow.

Jan. 4. The House having resumed the adjourned debate on the question proposed yesterday, "That the bill be now read a third time,"

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—I rise merely for the purpose of declaring that my opinion of this bill remains unchanged by any of the modifications which it has undergone. My strongest objections ever were against the principles on which it is founded. The only justifiable mode of taxation, as it appears to me, is this—Let the government of a country, according to the sense it entertains of the circumstances or exigency in which that country is placed, impose a tax upon houses, horses, carriages, or any other articles whatsoever; but let it never interfere with, or obstruct the exercise of, the right of the individual, to subject himself to that share of the burthen, which his condition in life will allow, but this bill takes away all option whatsoever; and the same power which thus seizes upon the tenth of my income, may hereafter seize upon the fifth or fourth part, or even that capital from which my income is derived. If this bill should pass, all the property of the kingdom is virtually transferred into the hands of the minister of the crown. Did gentlemen consider that I am now pleading the cause of private property against a most unwarrantable act of government, they would not surely lend the least countenance to so arbitrary a proceeding. That ministers should thus endeavour to make themselves masters of all the property in the country, does not affect me with surprise. The attempt is quite in unison with their favourite doctrine, that the right of private property is not stronger than the right by which they hold the emoluments of office. Thus to weaken the right of private property, by reducing it to the level of the precarious tenure upon which they enjoy their salaries, is to undermine the foundation of those pillars, of which they boast themselves to be the most zealous supporters. Is it a wonder then,

that they should commit this flagrant violation upon the property of the subject? Indeed, Sir, they seem to tread fast in the steps of those French legislators, whose conduct they have so often and so loudly condemned and reprobated. The inviolability of public credit and private property is the great cement of civilized society. By their assignats and their requisitions, the French legislators violated both. Have not ministers copied their criminal example, by depriving the Bank of England note of its convertibility into specie, and by the present forced contribution, a contribution more severe than any which Robespierre himself extorted from his unhappy country. Robespierre only said—I must have your tenth horse, or your tenth waggon, but how do our ministers act? They raise such levies upon the subject, that he would gladly let his house without rent, or make a present of his horse and carriage to any person who would undertake to pay the taxes demanded upon these articles, but he can find no one inclined to accept his offer upon such hard conditions.—Another objection to this bill is, the principle upon which each man's proportion of the present demand is to be regulated. The object of the minister is, to raise a contribution proportioned to the wealth and power of each individual: and to settle those proportions, he has resource to the last return of the assessed taxes, which in his judgment, is a criterion of income. The chancellor of the exchequer here adopts two positions both of which are easily refuted. He assumes that the last return of the assessed taxes is a criterion of income, and that income is a criterion of property. How, Sir, can you discover the income of the individual from his last, or indeed from any payment to the assessed taxes? Is it not obvious, that many indulge in that species of expense, which subjects them to the assessed taxes, whilst others, who have a much larger income, pay but little to them? And is it not indisputable, that some persons in trade, whether from the extent of the buildings, or from the particular situation which their business may require, are under the necessity of paying a greater proportion of assessed taxes than others, whose mercantile gains are far more considerable? As to the idea that income is the criterion of property, or of the respective powers of each man to contribute, how is this to be maintained? Is the annuitant for life, a man of equal property

with him who has the same income in fee? Or is the tenant for life, who cannot transmit his estate to his children a man of equal power to contribute to the support of the state, with him whose lands are descendable to his posterity? Again let me ask, is the person, who has an income arising from the short annuities, worth no less than him, who has the same amount accruing from the long annuities? The former expirable in ten, the latter in sixty years. But whatever inequalities or hardships may arise from estimating a man's ability to pay taxes by the rule of his expenditure, they are all smoothed, we are told, by the declaration which affords redress to each individual grievance. But what is this declaration or oath, entitling him who can comply with it, to total exemption in some cases, and in others to such an abatement of the contribution, as reduces it to the tenth of his annual income? I will look into your circumstances, says the finance minister, I will make myself thoroughly acquainted with your condition, that I may determine whether you be or be not equal to the payment of this exaction. What is this but to erect an inquisitorial power, absolutely repugnant to the principles of a free constitution? Besides, Sir, what will be the effect of this declaration? The conscientious tradesman, cannot avail himself of the proposed amendment, because he knows that he can never speak with certainty of an income dependent upon book debts, which may be good or bad; but if we suppose that he could exactly ascertain his nett annual returns, he would never solicit to be eased from a demand by a disclosure of his affairs, which must impair his credit, and eventually destroy the subsistence and hopes of himself and family. But the wicked and unprincipled of every class, if it be consistent with their interest, will not scruple to make a false declaration, or take a false oath. Thus the virtuous only will bear the burthen of the contribution. At the same time, perjury will be multiplied, immorality will abound, the nation will each day grow more and more depraved, and the bands of general confidence and civil society will finally be torn asunder. Upon these grounds, Sir, I object to this bill, notwithstanding all the modifications which have been made in it. I object to it, because it attacks the sacred right of private property, because it makes payment to the assessed taxes a proof of wealth and because the

very remedy, which it proposes, is pernicious in its effects, and repugnant to every rational idea of liberty.

Mr. *Shaw Lefevre* approved of the bill, and hoped gentlemen of property would second its operation by voluntary contributions. He quoted a passage from *Smollett's History of England*, relative to the contributions of the merchants, made in support of government in 1745.

Mr. *Perceval* said, that all those who spoke against the measure had carefully avoided speaking of those circumstances in which the country must be placed, should it not be adopted. An hon. baronet (sir F. Burdett) had objected to the measure, not so much on account of the pressure of it, as of the application of the money to be raised by it; since it would enable ministers to carry on a war against liberty. Now, if the present was a war against liberty, it was that species of liberty against which, he trusted, we should ever bear arms. He begged the House to take notice at what period this observation was made: it was made when the French "army of England" was embodied, when preparations were making for the invasion of this country by an army, bringing with it in its train, all the ruin of French reform and of French principles. Yet this was the time chosen for declaiming against the continuance of the war; which we were also told by the same authority, was continued from an apprehension that such a form of government would arise in France, as, by the contrast, should render Englishmen dissatisfied with that under which they lived. The hon. baronet had stated, that he was apprehensive of an economic government arising in France, least it might produce in this country, he did not know what. When he first saw the gentlemen who had now returned to their seats, absent themselves from the House, he had supposed they did so lest they should disturb the unanimity of the House; and he therefore felt astonished at seeing them return to give a dissenting vote on the present measure. The right hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Fox) had, however, undeceived him as to the motives of his secession. He had told the House that he did not hope for a remedy of the evils of which he complained from those within, but from those without the walls of the House: he had left the House from an apprehension that the people might, by his attendance, be deceived into an idea that there subsisted any thing like a re-

presentation of them in that House. The right hon. gentleman had, however, failed in supporting his charge: the people would see that a large majority of the House, which he asserted had no sympathy with them, attended to their duty; and that if reform was necessary, it was rendered so by the conduct of those who were most clamorous for it.—He should now proceed to discuss the bill. The urgency of the times constituted a leading feature in the present measure. It was not in our power to choose a peace. The enemy would not give us it. The only choice which remained to us, was that of a peace connected with subjection and with danger to our existence, or of war. Under that choice government had certainly acted.—It had been urged, that the present war was unnecessary, unless as far as it was essential to the continuance in office of the present administration. If this was the case, we were to suppose, that a negotiator was to be found on the other side of the House. But supposing a change of administration were to take place, and that the right hon. gentleman opposite were to come into power—on what terms would he be willing to form a part of any administration? He had already declared, that he would not come in without a total, fundamental, and radical reform of parliament; and he begged the House to attend to those most dangerous and alarming words. He knew the right hon. gentleman would resort to explanation, if he thought this too high seasoned for the public, and that he would say, that by total reform he meant only to touch parts; by fundamental reform, not to injure the foundation; and by radical reform, only to meddle with the branches. But words did not cease to be dangerous because they were susceptible of interpretation; they ceased only in that case to be ambiguous; they were dangerous as long as they bore an interpretation, from which the most violent reformer must see encouragement for his views and intentions, in spite of any ambiguity. He would, however, go farther, and say, that if they were even less explicit, and could only bear such an interpretation as that which he contended they did bear, there must be alarm and danger in them from the quarter from whence they came. The house and the country would not forget that the right hon. gentleman who told them that a total, a fundamental, and a radical reform was necessary, was the same gentle-

man who considered an opposition to the laws of his country as a question of prudence, and not of morality; that it was the same gentleman who had deserted his duty, that the people might suppose themselves not represented; that it was the same gentleman who had told the House, after the state trials in 1794, that he was not only satisfied with the verdict of the jury, but that he was convinced there was nothing treasonable in the intention of the men, and no design against the constitution of the country. If the right hon. gentleman were our negotiator, it was indeed probable that peace might be obtained, since one of the wishes of the French, that of seeing him in power, would be gratified. He begged gentlemen would attend to the words of the French, when professing friendship for this country, and they would see nothing in them favourable to a peace, on practicable terms, but that all they implied was, that they had a party in this country.—If the House agreed with him as to the necessity of continuing the war, the only question was, whether it was prudent to raise a large proportion of the supplies for the service of the year within the year? And as he had heard no argument against this, he must suppose that the House coincided with him in opinion. It had been admitted by the right hon. gentleman, that it would have been a good measure if it had been adopted in the beginning of the war; and he supposed this admission proceeded from an idea, either that the increase of the funding system was injurious to posterity, or that the interest of it was too great for the country to bear. In either case it seemed to him evident, that an addition of 200 millions of debt rendered it necessary to have recourse to some other system. And then the only question to be considered was, whether any other manner of raising money promised to be attended with better success than that now proposed?—Until last night, the measure of the assessed taxes had stood without a rival: last night, however, an hon. gentleman had stated a plan, which was to be more productive than that before the House: he had proposed a measure which, taking less than one-tenth of their property from the classes of the people on whom this measure would fall, should be more productive. This, if practicable, would certainly be a good scheme. The hon. gentleman had not stated in what proportion it was to fall on landlords, and in what upon tenants. In his scheme, as

far as it related to shopkeepers, rent was to be the criterion. And how was this rent to be ascertained—from the parish books of rates? Certainly not: they furnished an estimate of the relative value of houses in the same parish, but did not apply to the whole country. It followed, then, that recourse must ultimately be had to the assessment as a criterion. The arguments which had been urged against the assessed tax bill, applied equally to this and every other measure. The first objection was, the direct operation which the tax would have on shopkeepers. That its operation, in the manner in which it had first been proposed, would have been injurious, was true; the House (that House which the right hon. gentleman asserted to have no sympathy in common with the people) felt that it would bear heavy; and they immediately gave relief to the class mentioned. When this was done the argument was altered, and we were told, that the thing was worse than before. Its direct operation had indeed been varied, but its indirect operation still continued to be oppressive. To this he could only say, that the money, if it was to be raised, must either come from the rich or from the poor, or from both together; only we were not to apply to the poor; and if we were not to apply to the rich, the result would be, that we must have no money at all.—The hon. baronet had said, that the people now began to question whether, if the enemy came, they could do worse. Did the people ask this? and was the hon. baronet when he heard the question, unprepared with an answer? If he was, he would furnish him with one. He might have told them, that the enemy would not act better towards us than they had done towards their own subjects. He might then have shown in what manner they had acted towards all ranks of men, and particularly towards men in that rank in which he himself stood. He might have told the inquirers how all merchandize was confiscated: he might have stated to the shop-keeper, who was fearful of the direct operation of the tax, what must have been the effect of the forced loan: he might have shown those who were apprehensive of the indirect operation of taxes what it must have been in France, when taking from every man, and rising in a proportion till they came to the sum of 9,000 livres, when they took half; they reduced every income to the standard of about 180*l.*, leaving no man a larger sum

than that for his annual expenses. Let the indirect consequences of this contracted expenditure be then calculated. Yet the present measure of assessment had been said to be worse than any that had ever been adopted by Robespierre; and it had been put in comparison with the total confiscation of property! No reasonable person could, he thought, hesitate in agreeing, that parliament did right in calling for large and liberal supplies, proportionable to the ability of every man to contribute.

Mr. *Martin* said, he should attend till a reasonable hour to hear the debate, and, being no party man, would listen with attention to all, and endeavour to form the best opinion he could. But he would neither waste his health nor his time by sitting till two or three o'clock in the morning, listening to speeches of two or three hours length. Honourable gentlemen would be better understood by the House, if they compressed their speeches into one quarter of the time.

Mr. *Sheridan* said:—Many of the topics which the learned gentleman has brought forward, I am ready to admit were fairly introduced, and perfectly regular in parliamentary debate. But while I admit the right of the learned gentleman to argue the subject in his own way, it perhaps might have been better if he had, to use a phrase which has become fashionable since the introduction of the present bill, modified his attack upon my right hon. friend. The hon. gentleman never attempted to show that the chancellor of the exchequer was the fittest person to administer the affairs of this country. The whole scope of his speech was merely to show that the right hon. gentleman was placed in the avenue to bar my right hon. friend, as if it necessarily followed, that he alone could be the successor of the present minister. Supposing, as he did, for the sake of argument, that my right hon. friend was qualified to negotiate, with a better prospect of success than the chancellor of the exchequer, he said it would be incumbent upon the House, as a preliminary step to treat with their negotiator. He thought that my right hon. friend could not be invested with that character without danger to the country. What were the grounds upon which this assertion was founded? He accuses my right hon. friend of having considered men as innocent who were acquitted by the verdict of a jury, and having argued upon this acquittal, that

there was no proof of the conspiracy of which they were accused. He accuses him of having said, on the discussions incident to the treason and sedition bills, that resistance would be a question not of morality, but of prudence. Above all, he founded his apprehension upon words which he supposes to have been lately used by my right hon. friend, that he would take no share in any administration without a total, fundamental, and radical reform. The hon. gentleman has made a very pretty play upon these words. I cannot but suspect, however, that the hon. gentleman, who has been celebrated for epigram, has put these words into the mouth of my right hon. friend, merely for the sake of the point with which he has contrasted them. He finds out that the reform so broadly stated will not be a total reform, that the fundamental reform will not touch the foundation, and that the radical reform will be confined to the branches without descending to the root. This epigrammatic wit, however, is founded entirely upon the words which the hon. gentleman has purposely added to the expression to which he alludes. They were not used by my hon. friend. The expression he employed, and which has become more conspicuous from its being made the subject of particular thanks in certain resolutions lately advertised, was, that he would take no share in any administration, without a radical reform in the representation and of the abuses of the present system. Such was the expression of my right hon. friend, and the words which the hon. gentleman has added, were merely introduced to point a sentence and to enliven his speech.—The hon. gentleman considers the conduct of those whom he represents as unfit successors to the present men in power, as calculated to encourage the Jacobins and to forward the views of the French. These certainly are formidable evils; but the hon. gentleman quickly discovers some ground of consolation amidst the dangers which he apprehends. He thinks that my right hon. friend would retract the declarations he has made; that he would renounce the principles he has avowed; and that in office he would not act upon the professions he held before he came into power. On what part of the conduct of my right hon. friend he founds this assertion, I am at a loss to conjecture? What are the professions made when out of office which in power he has belied? True

it is that such conduct is not unusual with statesmen. True it is that there have been men who have forfeited such pledges; who have said that there could be no salvation for this country without a radical reform (for this beyond dispute was the expression of the right hon. gentleman opposite) who have maintained that no honest man could undertake the administration of this country without that reform, may, like him, abandon the principles they once held, and have resisted by all the power of corruption the cause which they laboured to promote. With the right hon. gentleman, the type and image of apostacy before his eyes, it perhaps was natural that the hon. gentleman should consider professions as made only to be renounced. When he reflected that the present minister had not only abandoned the principles he professed, and violated the faith he pledged to the public, but had become the most zealous persecutor of those whom he had convinced by his argument, and influenced by his example, there was no wonder that he should distrust professions, and ascribe but little sincerity to the declarations of statesmen.

The hon. gentleman apprehends that many dreadful consequences would ensue were this radical reform to be carried into effect. What that radical change of system is to be, the hon. gentleman professes to be ignorant. For my own part, no man can be more decidedly hostile than I am to any change of system that could lead to a change of the ancient established constitution of this government. But I will tell the hon. gentleman what has been the consequence of that change of system which has been introduced into the constitution of this country. If any minister of brilliant talents, of splendid endowments, but actuated by principles of the most boundless and colossal ambition, raised up by influence, supported by corruption, should set at nought the rules of parliament, violate the act of appropriation, raise money, and send it out of the country without the consent of parliament; if he has transgressed the constitution with impunity; if his criminality is suffered to pass even without rebuke, this is nothing less than a radical change of system. If by his folly and incapacity he has raised discontents; if by the burthens which he has imposed to support an impolitic and ruinous system, he has alienated the minds of the people from his government; if to suppress the opposition

which such a state of things must naturally produce, he has had recourse to military force, and covered the country with barracks, in defiance of the constitution; such practices constitute a radical change of system. If he has distinguished his administration by severity unknown to the laws of this country; if he has introduced new codes of treason and sedition; if he has doomed men of talents to the horrors of transportation, the victims of harsh and rigorous sentences; if he has laboured to vilify and to libel the conduct of juries, such proceedings originate in a radical change of system. If he has used the royal prerogative in the creation of peers, not to reward merit, but has converted the peerage into the regular price of base and servile support; if he has carried this abuse so far, that were the indignant, insulted spirit of this nation roused at length to demand justice on the crime of which he has been guilty, he would be tried in a House of Peers, where the majority of the judges were created by himself—I will tell the hon. gentleman that such a state of things must have originated in a radical change of system. Would it not be right then, to pull down that fabric of corruption, to recall the government to its original principles, and to re-establish the constitution upon its true basis? Will any set of men deny the necessity of a radical change of system, by which these evils shall be corrected but those who already share in its corruptions, or who, at some future period, expect to promote their personal interests by those very abuses which have exhausted the strength and endangered the safety of their country.

So much then for what the hon. gentleman has said upon this subject. It must now be clear that no peace can be obtained. It was not even supposed by the friends of ministers that they were sincere in their attempts at peace till the last trial; then I am rather inclined to give them credit for sincerity, though I can see that a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Windham) trembles at the very idea of peace with the French republic. The hon. gentleman takes it for granted, that there can be no choice but between the chancellor of the exchequer and my right hon. friend; on a former occasion, however, I stated, that any other set of men should try to negotiate peace with France, because any other set of men must negotiate with a better prospect of

success than the present ministers; it is not in nature that the French can consider the right hon. gentleman capable of maintaining the relations of peace and amity with their government. They know that the hostile mind exists; that peace is not sought in the spirit of peace; that no real reconciliation is desired. Any peace that could be concluded, I should consider as a false and hollow truce. It could not be a ground of security; it could not restore the blessings of peace. Upon the faith of it, I could not consent to the reduction of a single man in the army or navy. Jealousies and suspicions would poison all the advantages which a sincere peace could bestow. The French would feel that they furnished to the administration of this country the means of fomenting the dissensions in France, from which they cherish the hope of re-establishing royalty; they would lay themselves open to those intrigues and to that corruption which have hitherto been employed to overthrow their new institutions. If the French Directory could agree to such an insidious truce, and expose the government which they administer to such attacks as in this way it would sustain, they would be guilty of treason to their country. But it is impossible they could risk such dangers. It is impossible that they could stake their existence on the hollow and deceitful peace which the present minister could offer.—The hon. gentleman, then, cannot say that there is no alternative between those who are in power, and those he points out as their successors. From different men and different measures, hopes of peace might be derived. But it is said, that my right hon. friend, and those who act with him, are co-operating with the French; and what is the proof of this assertion? Why, the French say so! This is a curious mode of proving the fact. It would indeed be a hard rule if what the enemy say of what is done by any members of the British parliament was to be the standard by which we were to be judged. We are not to be tried by what we have said, by the measures we have recommended, by the whole of our conduct, and by our own professions, but by the opinion which the enemy may think proper to express! But how then do we co-operate with the enemy? We are friends to reform; a phrase which it seems is henceforth to be deemed synonymous with revolution. But how is this reform, from

which such dreadful consequences are apprehended, to be introduced? If my right hon. friend were to support it when in office, will not the right hon. gentleman be still ready to oppose it? The hon. gentleman either thinks that my right hon. friend, when minister, will have in favour of reform that corruption, that influence, those titles, those jobs and contracts, by which it is now opposed; or he thinks that parliament being dissolved, that corruption and influence will be employed to induce the people to choose representatives favourable to the cause of reform. What do these arguments prove but the necessity of a reform? It proves that the pretended representation of the country is in the hands of the crown, to be moulded at the pleasure of the minister of the day, and thus furnishes the most powerful motive to remove the causes by which this corruption is maintained.

Having made these remarks, I shall next say a few words upon some things which fell from a noble lord (Hawkesbury) in yesterday's debate. The noble lord says, that those who oppose all supply ought to have made that opposition when the supply was voted. For my own part, I am not against all supply, though I am not sure that a different conduct would not be fully as proper. But in a constitutional view nothing can be more parliamentary than to refuse voting a supply. It is fair to infer that if ministers have not the confidence of this House, the refusal of supplies would be attended with the immediate resignation of those ministers. Certainly, it is not the intention of any man that the army or navy should be disbanded, and the country laid at the feet of the enemy. Such an alternative does not follow from the refusal of supplies. I confess, however, when I consider the desperate characters of some of the ministers, I think it would not be advisable to risk the attempts of which they might be guilty to retain their power, even in defiance of the constitutional privileges of this House. The noble lord however says, that never was our naval glory more highly exalted, than by the brilliant victories obtained during the present war. What however must be the nature of the war, when these splendid successes have not brought us nearer to the objects for which we engaged in the contest? What must be the importance of our acquisitions, when they are all to be given for peace? How would France

have stood had we not entered into the war? asks the noble lord. What additional strength would she not have derived from those ships and those colonies of which she has been deprived by our success? But let any man weigh the advantages we have derived from our success with the sacrifices by which they have been purchased. Will any man say that if this country had preserved a dignified neutrality, France, surrounded as she was by foreign enemies, would have still more oppressed and harassed her subjects to raise a naval power which no danger required? Contrary to all practice, to all experience, would France, in the situation in which she was placed, have turned her attention to naval exertions? But we gained several ships by the victory of the 1st of June, by the capture of Toulon, by the acquisition of those chanel houses in the West Indies, in which 50,000 men have been lost to this country! But for these boasted successes, I will say, give me back the blood of Englishmen which has been shed in this fatal contest—give me back the 250 millions of debt which it has occasioned—give me back the honour of the country which has been tarnished—give me back the credit of the country, which has been destroyed—give me back the solidity of the Bank of England, which has been overthrown; the attachment of the people to their ancient constitution, which has been shaken by acts of oppression and tyrannical laws—give me back the kingdom of Ireland, the connexion of which is endangered by a cruel and outrageous system of military coercion—give me back that pledge of eternal war which must be attended with inevitable ruin! Put what we have lost into the scale against what we have gained, and see if the price exceeds the value of the object.—But even all these advantages, we are told, may be given up for peace. Surely, then, a person of the noble lord's abilities can never consider those objects as acquisition which are to be given up for peace.—With regard to the continental war, the noble lord says, that we had done our duty, but he now discovers that our allies were guilty of every error, and all of them were destitute of common honesty. After four years experience of the conduct of our allies, and of the principles by which they were guided, the noble lord could vote for two millions to one of them. Even this ally, the theme of so much panegyric, is now

comprehended in the general charge of the noble lord against the continental members of the confederacy. But in the prosecution of their views of personal interest and aggrandizement they took the example from the conduct of this country. When they found the hypocritical pretences of religion, morality, and social order belied by our eagerness to plunder every possession which was exposed to our power, they began to be actuated by the same motives. — Those who would succeed ministers it is said, however, are connected with Jacobins. Who are they who are connected with the Jacobins? Will gentlemen seriously say that they believe that those whom they represent as the only rivals of the present ministers are leagued with any faction to alter the constitution of this country, in the same manner as the Jacobites in the year 1745 were hostile to the existing establishment.

I shall now proceed to make some remarks on the speech of a learned doctor (Laurence) who spoke last night. The learned gentleman went into a wide view of the Roman history, and told us upon the authority of Scipio, that we had little to dread from the threatened invasion of the enemy, because they must conquer us before we could conquer them. What would the lord mayor and aldermen of London say, if the learned gentleman were to tell them when Buonaparté was encamped at Blackheath, that they need be under no apprehension that before he could advance to burn the city of London, lord Hawkesbury was marching to lay Paris in ashes? In the representation of the conduct of Hanno at Carthage, by whose exertions the supplies were refused to Hannibal, the learned doctor did not do justice to Hanno. At the same time it is to be observed, that he said not a word of the striking difference between Hanno the Carthaginian, and the Hanno whom he insinuated to be in the British senate. Hanno succeeded in keeping back the supplies. But has the British Hanno ever been able to prevail upon the senate to refuse the supplies? has he unnerved the vigour of our exertions: has he checked the career of success: has he suspended our victorious arms in the moment of triumph? On the contrary, has not the minister received supplies with unexampled profusion; has he ever been rebuked for misapplication of them; has his misconduct ever been the subject even of inquiry? Hannibal too was a young

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man — “*juvenum flagrantem cupidine regni.*” The argument of Hanno was, “I hear of the victories of Hannibal, but I hear of no advantage which they produce to Carthage.” Every victory is followed by fresh demands and new requisitions. The continuance of the war must therefore prove ruinous to Carthage,—“*Carthaginis mœnia quatit.*” The affairs of the Carthaginians afterwards miscarried. Hannibal afterwards laughed at his countrymen. But what did he laugh at? He laughed at those who affected to be dissatisfied with the terms of peace, without considering in whose hands they had left the conduct of the war. In similar circumstances any man might perhaps smile like Hannibal, to see the people of this country discontented with the terms of peace, when it was remembered that the war was prosecuted under the auspices of the present ministers.—I cannot refrain however, from expressing my astonishment that a grave personage like the learned gentleman, a member of the gravest profession which this House contains, should bring forward all his school-boy politics to evince the propriety of invading France. The learned gentleman, perhaps, thinks that it falls to his share to support in this House the opinions of a man of much greater talents, of much higher endowments, the late Mr. Burke, whose name ought never to be mentioned but with respect. He thinks, perhaps, that he is the executor of that great man’s principles; that he is called upon to administer to his fury, without possessing a single spark of his fire. I regret that any gentleman should conceive himself the representative of the violent and extravagant declamations which fatally were received in this House with so much approbation, and which have been attended with such lamentable consequences to this country and to Europe. The frivolous school-boy topics upon which the learned gentleman proposes to model our conduct, have indeed no similarity to the circumstances in which we are placed. When he desires us to imitate the conduct of the Romans, does he remember that the Romans were a people inured to war and to hardships? Does he mean to compare a commercial country like Great Britain with a warlike people like the Romans, or to point out similar rules of policy for the guidance of our conduct? Had Rome the debt by which this country is borne down? Had Rome the bulwark of a navy

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supported by commerce? Would sacking that capital have given a death to that credit, by which alone we can subsist as a nation? If the arguments of the learned gentleman could even produce the effect which he desires, the event would not furnish a subject for the moralist and the historian, but the fate which would await the right hon. gentleman, if he was seduced by such counsels, might be expressed in the language of the poet—

——I demens, curre per Alpes,

Ut pueris placeas et declamatio fias.

Posterity would brand his name in the same manner, furnishing in his destruction only the subject of panegyric to school-boy politicians, and a speech to a grave doctor learned in the law.

I shall now say a few words to the question. It has been asked, do those who oppose this measure admit the principle, or can they produce any thing better? Certainly, no person is bound to propose a measure of his own when he rises to oppose that of the chancellor of the exchequer, yet in such a crisis as the present it would be unmanly to withhold any ideas which we can contribute. I then say, that the only mode by which any sum like that required can be raised, is by a loan, the interest of which is to be paid by taxes or voluntary contribution, with a sinking fund for the extinction of the debt. This is the true principle by which money in this country can be raised. Suppose it is impossible to borrow; in such a state of things this country is ruined. If government can borrow, the subject cannot give. I am very far from wishing to inculcate despair. If I really entertained such a sentiment, I should wish to disguise it even to myself. But we may yet borrow. How, then, are the funds to be raised to that state at which it may be convenient to borrow? It must be done by retrenchment in the public expense. If public spirit does exist, voluntary subscriptions may afford some aid; but, of this, I am not very sanguine. Above all, however, it is necessary to restore the Bank to its former credit; to prevent any stipulation being made, to prevent it from paying its just debts; and to restore to the country the blessings of peace.—As to the present measure, it must end in a forced contribution of income by forced disclosure—a thing utterly irreconcilable to the spirit of a free and commercial country. If assessors were to be appointed arbitrarily to make

assessments of the income of every individual, which, from the surveys already made by the collectors of the income of individuals, seems to be the design of ministers, such a mode of proceeding would be a better criterion than the assessed taxes. In my mind, no criterion at all, however good it may be thought, can render the principle tolerable. Those who, from the criterion taken up by the minister this year, have been caught, will be careful to avoid any external symptoms, by which, on a future occasion, they might be assessed. It will occasion universal retrenchment, and consequently injure the revenue by destroying consumption. The effect of this system of retrenchment will diminish the public revenue by at least two millions. An arbitrary assessment would be better than that taken on any criterion, because the former would make it indifferent to the person contributing whether he spent all his income or not; while the latter would induce him to avoid every appearance that could be made the future standard of contribution. The whole system and principle of the measure appears to me utterly irreconcilable with every wise and just scheme of taxation.

What substitute, then, is to be taken? There are but three ways in which this sum can be raised within the year, either by voluntary contribution, by increasing the existing taxes, or by a forced loan; and of these three the present measure is the worst. Might not the whole of the plan be postponed, except that which provides for voluntary contributions. With this bill hanging over, such contributions could not be called voluntary; for no man could hesitate, in point of prudence, to pay the full amount of what he would be obliged to pay, rather than be made to contribute on the valuation of income taken from any visible symptoms. I am not very sanguine of the success of voluntary contribution, without some such compulsion. From the highest to the lowest of those connected with the government, there has been no disposition to give up any thing; there has been no example to the people of this spirit of sacrifice. It is not easy to encourage individuals in the habits of acquisition, and the spirit of liberality towards the government. If a Bengal moonshi, or a Chinese mandarin, were to be informed that 400 millions had been lent to the government by individuals; that a race was run by the competitors for the pre-

ference, he would be ready to exclaim, "O, magnanimous, O, invincible people!" Were he again to be told that the views which actuated the lenders were selfish, that their profits were usurious; that loyalty loan-holders had besieged their house for indemnification of the loss sustained on a bargain, he would exclaim, "O wretched, O undone people!" It is by addressing the interest of this body of men, however, that the accommodation of the government can be secured; and how is the credit of the country to be restored to that situation which will render it practicable? No disposition to contribute voluntarily has yet been displayed from the highest to the lowest ranks in the administration of the government. While a teller of the exchequer receives 10 or 12,000*l.* a year by the war, a near relation of that person contends that no peace ought to be made. But I am told that it is rude, uncourteous, vulgar, to suppose that such a sum could influence the sentiments of any man. Rude, uncourteous and vulgar as this is, the constitution is that rude, vulgar fellow. The constitution is jealous of the effect of office, and even sends a man back to his constituents, who accepts a situation to which important duties are attached. I have an authority, therefore, for supposing that some bias may affect the mind where interest powerfully prompts a man to support any system of measures. I recollect, that at the end of the American war, when I was secretary to the Treasury, the noble marquis, who is teller of the exchequer, wrote a letter to the commissioners of the Treasury, requesting that the office might be placed in the reform, but saying at the same time, that his conscience would burn to think that he was profiting by the calamities of the country. This offer, however, was declined. Now, however, when the public exigencies so strongly demand some sacrifice, I am persuaded the noble marquis will not only be ready to forego a part of the profits of his office, but will bring up all the arrears which burn upon his conscience since the year 1783.

Last year I took occasion to state that 24 millions would be necessary for the peace establishment of the country, taking the average peace establishment before the war at 17 millions. Since that period $7\frac{1}{2}$ millions of permanent taxes have been added, and it will require another million and a half before the sum already

expended and due can be provided. Thus, 26 millions must be raised though peace were immediately to take place. When it is considered, however, what any new peace establishment must be; when the system which is pursued in this country is taken into view; when the manner in which Ireland is not governed, but ground down and oppressed; when the hollow and deceitful nature of any peace which the right hon. gentleman can make is recollected, no man can think that 28 millions would be an extravagant computation as the amount of the permanent peace establishment. This is a tremendous and awful consideration, but if the country is to be saved, we must look our situation in the face, and make provision for the utmost extent of our difficulties.—While the Bank continues in its present state of dependence on the minister, it is impossible to hope that the public credit can be restored and the funds raised. Last year much was said in the newspapers about the connexion between the right hon. gentleman and the Bank. It was said that the bans had been forbid. The conduct of the chancellor of the exchequer showed that he cultivated the connexion on account of the lady's dowry, not for the comfort of her society. At first the affair seemed to present the appearance of a penitent seduction, but now it has degenerated into a contented prostitution. The country wished to forgive the indiscretion on the hopes of amendment. What has produced the infatuation it is not easy to conjecture, unless the right hon. gentleman has given the old lady love-powder. The heyday of the blood is over, but the rankness of passion has not subsided. In the first instance, it might be no more than a case of seduction, but from her subsequent conduct it became arrant prostitution. She might exclaim with Calista, in the Fair Penitent,

"I swear I cou'd not see the dear betrayer
Kneel at my feet and sigh to be forgiven,
But my relenting heart would pardon all,
And quite forget 'twas he that had undone me."

Nothing could more offend the decency and sense of a commercial people, than to observe the juggle between the minister and the Bank. Upon the examination into the affairs of the Bank, the standing committee of correspondence between the Bank and the minister pronounce that there are sufficient means to pay all the private debts of the Bank—but the mi-

nister interposes. The Bank is placed in the situation of a person who can pay and will not. Of all situations none can be more injurious to credit than this. When it is known that men are willing to pay, credit sketches a great way in favour of their ability; but when a person is understood to be able to pay, and will not, the confidence on which credit must be founded is overthrown.—The manner in which the last report of the Bank committee is drawn up is likewise very curious. It is found there are enough of funds to pay the private creditors of the Bank; but no, says the chancellor of the exchequer, and claps his lock and key on their coffers. Without meaning any quibble on the name of the chairman of the committee, the conduct of the right hon. gentleman irresistibly reminds me of an old proverb. The report of the committee is very favourable, but still the Bank must be kept under confinement. “Brag is a good dog,” says the chancellor of the exchequer, “but Holdfast is a better,” and the Bank must be kept under the tutorage of the minister till he finds it convenient for himself to set the Directors at liberty. The advances made by the Bank to government occasioned the first stoppage, and now three millions are again to be advanced without any security. If the Directors do not insist on some security for their repayment, they will be guilty of a gross breach of duty, and the most culpable neglect of the interest of their constituents. It seems that the Bank is to be the new temple of Janus, ever shut in time of war. While war continues we must be contented to view the meagre paper profile; nor shall we be permitted to contemplate the golden bust till the return of peace. The French Directory are thus to have the keys of the Bank, which cannot be opened till they grant permission.

The right hon. gentleman says, that the French aim their attacks against the credit of this country, and that it is necessary to guard against their design. The expression of the report is whimsical enough. It states that the enemy design to attack us “by means of our credit.” No, says the chancellor of the exchequer, I have taken care to take that weapon out of your hands; any other weapon, but this I certainly will not leave you to employ.—It is said by some that the conduct of those who oppose the minister encourages the French; while, on the

contrary, the whole system of his administration tends to encourage their designs. He has taught them to believe that he governs the lower classes only by coercion, and the upper by corruption. More is done by the language held by some gentlemen in this House, that it is necessary to confine the soldiers in barracks to make them deaf, if the people cannot be made dumb, than by any conduct which can be imputed to the opposers of ministers. By showing that the minister can get no support unpurchased, the enemy are led to think that there is no public spirit in the country, that nothing can be done but by jobs, and titles, and pensions. When they see the nation endure these things, can they conceive it will be found to contain much public spirit to resist a foreign enemy. Beyond question great sacrifices must be made whoever is minister; and if the enemy persevere in their designs, resistance to invasion must be encouraged at every hazard. We must give up the idea, however, of doing this and continuing in a state of luxury. Should it be necessary we must show that we are ready to strip to the skin to maintain our independence and our liberties, in the same manner as they were compelled to struggle for their freedom. It is mere cant and delusion to talk any longer of giving up a part to preserve the whole. If I am called upon to pay a shilling to preserve the rest, this is intelligible; but if I am called upon twenty times successively for my shilling, it is ridiculous to tell me of giving a part for the preservation of the whole. This will not do, and as a worthy baronet said on another occasion, if it is so often repeated it comes to be no joke. This kind of paradoxical insult cannot long be endured. It will not do to tell us that sending millions of money to Germany for the defence of this country is true economy; that to lop off the most valuable of our liberties is to preserve the constitution; that not to pay its lawful creditors is to support the credit of the bank; and that to introduce a universal disclosure of income is to protect property. This is the last stage of such delusion. The tricks have been too often repeated to elude the most inattentive observation. While the affairs of this country continue in the same hands, they cannot be administered wisely or well. The country cannot have confidence in a system always unsuccessful, now hopeless; and the dismissal of minis-

ters must be the preliminary step to any vigour of system, or any prospect of peace.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, he had no hesitation in declaring, that if there ever was a measure which, of all others, deserved approbation, and was likely to bring the country out of its distress, it was the present. Our strength as a nation was not diminished. It was for that House to consider whether any measure could be adopted by which the resources of the country could be called forth, without materially depreciating the funds. The present was a measure of that sort. The salutary consequences of the measure were obvious. On the return of peace the capital would be found in such a state, as that, in a few years, by the operation of the sinking fund, the minister of the day would be able to take off from, instead of adding to, the burthens of the people. Gentlemen opposite when they wished to draw an unfavourable picture of our finances, uniformly compared them with the state they were in in 1792. But who exalted them to their then unparalleled state of prosperity? His right hon. friend. When he considered this, and recollected the recent language of some gentlemen on the other side, and their invectives and assertions respecting his right hon. friend's administration of the finances, he must infer, that these gentlemen either did not express their real sentiments, or did not understand the subject. No serious alarm was therefore to be entertained from their comments on that head. He was confident the result would prove the wisdom of his right hon. friend's financial conduct. He would next notice the project which had been suggested by a learned gentleman, with the intent of rendering the present measure unnecessary. Whatever partiality the learned gentleman might have for a darling offspring, it would be found, on examination liable to all the objections of that now under discussion; and with respect to its details, if that part of it was left out, which went to impose a tax upon transfers of the funds, much less would be produced by the learned gentleman's plan, than by the bill in question. He would request gentlemen fairly to speak out and say, if they could possibly reconcile their minds to a tax upon the funds. He did not say whether such a measure would be right or wrong; but what would gentlemen say as to the probability of such a proceeding? He would ask for the opinion of any candid

man as to the propriety of a tax upon funded property, keeping in mind at the same time the necessity of raising part of the supplies within the year. It would be weak and foolish indeed, to lay aside the present plan; as most probably, after an investigation, the project alluded to would be found impracticable. Procrastinations must ensue of course, and the result would be, that government would be left without a shilling to pay the army and the navy. Much stress had been laid by the hon. gentleman on the conduct of ministers with respect to the Bank. That question was amply discussed last session, and subsequent events had proved how little founded were the conjectures of gentlemen opposite, as to any ill effect arising from those measures. One of the principal objections against the bill was, that it was entrusting large sums of money to those who lavishly squandered what had passed through their hands before. This clearly was no argument against the measure, whatever it might be against the men who proposed it. Some gentlemen seemed zealously to wish for the appointment of a right hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox) to the head of affairs; and they also seemed to be warmly attached to the cause of radical reform. But were they assured that even that right hon. gentleman was prepared to carry all his plans of reform into effect? Were gentlemen assured that the public were disposed to receive that right hon. gentleman as minister? There had been of late many rumours of ministerial removals—changes were said to have been in contemplation—a great body of members were said to have been desirous of them, and a noble lord was talked of as a proper head of administration. Now, what would the adherents of the right hon. gentleman say to this—that at the very moment when they held out their champion as the only person capable of retrieving the affairs of the nation, the great body of members alluded to, who had attempted to effect a change of ministry, had actually excluded that right hon. gentleman from any share in their proposed administration.* An

* Mr. Dundas, in this part of his speech, evidently alluded to the following

LETTER from Earl Moira to Lieutenant-Colonel M'Mahon, relative to a Change of Administration.

Dorrington, June 15, 1797.

"My dear Colonel; The information which

hon. gentleman had dwelt on the circumstance of the creation of peers—on a charge of sending money out of the country—and on a supposed violation of the Appropriation act. But he would ask, why the hon. gentleman and his friends had ab-

you have given to me of the reports circulating with regard to the late political negotiations, is in one respect material. It confirms a suspicion which had occurred to me that it was an object to have me thought disposed towards such a coalition:—and the Oracle, which I had not seen before you transmitted it, exceedingly strengthened the supposition. If I have left room for those erroneous statements by not proclaiming to all the world the arrangements that were in view, it did not proceed from my not having taken a precise and defined line; still less did it arise from any notion of advantage in *concealment*; for the gentlemen with whom I conferred had not any purpose which they wished to disguise; and I strongly urged them not to give any appearance of intrigue to the business by any affectation of *secrecy*. Indeed, I know that some of them declared their intentions very openly to the persons most concerned, the ministers; which, perhaps, has facilitated the attempt of throwing a colour of collusion on the plan. My sole reason for not talking more openly on what was in contemplation was, that I had declined being a principal mover in the business, and that I thought it would have been an air of vanity if I proclaimed the flattering recurrence of so many respectable characters to me. It was before Easter that some members of the House of Commons (not those who used to meet at sir John Sinclair's), sent to ask for an opportunity of conversing with me on political topics. When we met, they said that a considerable number of the independent members, who had hitherto voted with administration, saw with excessive alarm the difficulties into which the country had been plunged, and which could not but increase rapidly, unless an adequate remedy were immediately applied. They added, that they had reflected on the nature of that remedy, and were convinced that a change of ministry must be the first step towards it; in consequence of which they had communed together, and had determined to fix their confidence upon me. They then requested that I would endeavour, on the assurance of their support, to form an administration on the principles of excluding persons who had on either side made themselves obnoxious to the public. As I saw the dangers of the country in the same light that they did, and believed that nothing could dispel them but the calling forth the general confidence of the nation, I could not dissent from the theory of their plan: the execution of it, however, I deemed impracticable; I stated to them the impossibility of their overpowering the ad-

herents of both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox: on which account I strenuously recommended that they should attempt to form with Mr. Fox's party an alliance that might be satisfactory to themselves and to the country; by discussing, and, when accepted, reducing to strict engagement, the extent of measures which Mr. Fox when brought into office by them would propose. The gentleman said, that many of their friends had taken so strong a part against Mr. Fox, and others had such a prejudice against him, that they had not any hope of bringing my proposition to bear with them. I repeated my reasoning as earnestly as possible, and prevailed upon those gentlemen to say they would recommend the suggestion to the consideration of their comrades. I pressed the counsel upon many of them individually afterwards; and I went out of town. Public matters growing more gloomy in their aspect every day, I received letters from some of those gentlemen containing such remonstrances on my absence, that I returned directly to London. The persons with whom I had before conferred, came to me as soon as they heard I was arrived. They told me the repugnance of their party to Mr. Fox was invincible; but that a sense of the extreme peril to which the state was exposed, had become so general, as to make it clear, that a majority of the House of Commons would be for a new administration; and they produced a very long list, indeed, of members, containing men of the greatest weight in the country, who wished that I should stand at their head. I explained to the gentlemen that to make myself the chief of a party would no more suit me than it would become them to enroll themselves under me; that though I must be flattered very highly as being thought by such personages equal to the guidance of affairs in so formidable a crisis, the situation to which they destined me was most ineligible for me; that I would, notwithstanding, not shrink from it, if my acceptance of it would be regarded by his majesty as an act of duty, and by the public as an act of zeal—that to ensure such a construction, I must not enter into any management or intrigue; but that the business must be done by their open and manly declaration of what they thought necessary for the public interest in such an exigency. I suspect that Mr. Fox obtained information of the sentiments of these gentlemen, and thence, with that elevated disinterestedness, and honest anxiety for the national welfare, which guides all his actions, determined by the sacrifice of his own pretensions to remove every obstacle from an arrangement which he

the nomination to the peerage constitutionally vested in the crown? The hon. gentleman should have brought forward these topics in parliament. With respect to the general conduct of the war, he would assert, that at no former period did

thought might be productive of good to the country. This step did indeed appear to forward the views of the independent members: for it seemed to call upon ministers to show an equal degree of public spirit, and to retire from stations which they could no longer fill with benefit to the empire. It was understood that they felt it so: and on that supposition the independent members made a more pointed application to me. Hitherto, nobody has been designated for any particular office but sir William Pulteney. The gentlemen had said that he was the person whom they should be most gratified in seeing chancellor of the exchequer: and I had professed to them and to him that there was not any person with whom I could act more confidently. From what I have mentioned, however, you will see that it was not in the contemplation of my friends to have an administration formed by a junction with the majority of the present cabinet. One person, indeed, had observed to me, that, if Mr. Pitt and lord Grenville were displaced, the remainder of the cabinet would suit my purposes as well as any men that I could find: but I directly met that suggestion, by a declaration, that nothing could induce me to go into office upon terms of that nature. The introduction of lord Thurlow, sir William Pulteney, and myself into that cabinet, could not assure the public of a change of system: and it was necessary that in the very outset, the confidence of the public should attach itself to our principles; I would therefore have nothing equivocal. Without meaning to proscribe individuals, there are certain points with which one must not palter. I cannot ever sit in a cabinet with the duke of Portland. He appears to me to have done more injury to the constitution, and to the estimation of the higher ranks in this country, than any man on the political stage. By his union with Mr. Pitt, he has given it to be understood by the people, that either all the constitutional changes which he and his friends for so many years urged against Mr. Pitt were groundless, or that being solid, there was no difficulty in waving them when a convenient partition of power and emoluments was proposed. In either case the people must infer that the constitutional principle which can be so played with, is unimportant; and that parliamentary professions are no security. Were I to connect myself with the duke of Portland, I must incur the imputation of similar laxity; and I must thereby forfeit any claim to a confidence, without which I could not be of any use; when nothing but the hope of being of

glory so uniformly attach to the British arms as during the present. No charge on the score of ill success was to be attributed to ministers. The West-Indian operations were loudly inveighed against by gentlemen; but this he would say,

use could make me for a moment listen to a proposal for undertaking office. My wish was to procure for colleagues many of those who had been acting in concert with Mr. Fox: and it was obvious that the step which he had taken was generously intended to leave them at liberty to join as unconnected individuals in a new administration. In this my friends, of whom not one aimed at office, entirely concurred, saying, that if I continued responsible to them for measures, I might take what men I chose. Those measures had been readily adjusted between us: for when I detailed to those gentlemen the plan on which alone I would undertake the management of affairs, we found that our sentiments agreed completely. I had stated that I must decline coming in, unless his majesty should graciously consent to these three conditions:—An endeavour to procure immediate peace—the tranquillization of Ireland by a just and lenient system of government—and a full disclosure to the nation as to the extent of our financial difficulties, in order to justify the call for those heavy contributions that would be requisite to re-establish credit. Of my friends, I demanded this condition: That no removals should be made in the household, Post-office, Mint, or any other department not immediately connected with ministerial function. To this they most readily assented. My view was, to profess that I would not form to myself a party; and that, as I had merely from the critical situation of public affairs consented to undertake a business foreign to the line of life which I had proposed to myself, I should consider it a fortunate release whensoever his majesty or parliament should think some other person fitter for the station. With the measures by which the change of administration was to be brought about, I was to have no concern. The sentiment of the independent members was indeed submitted through me, as some channel was necessary for the transmission of their joint opinions. But in this I took no farther part. In pursuance of my system I declined remaining in London; lest from constant communications, the matter should degenerate into political intrigue. I have given you this long detail that you may be empowered to contradict any misstatement that you hear: and you are perfectly welcome to show this letter to any respectable man of any party; as there was not a point throughout the business, which I, or any of those with whom I conferred, need wish to conceal. Not a single man of those who assured me of their support ever hinted at a private object, much less

that while they were in contemplation, and the preparations for them were no secret, gentlemen did not advance a single objection. The plan of operations in that quarter was approved of by the West Indian proprietors. They knew that offensive operations, at that time, were the best means of preserving our own islands. Recurring again to the particular subject of discussion, he contended, that the measure was as politic as it was necessary.

Mr. *Tierney* said, he rose to make a few observations on some of the uncandid statements in the latter part of the right hon. gentleman's speech. It was to ministers themselves that he could trace those misrepresentations concerning his right hon. friend. Well, indeed, might they be alarmed, when they found that a large body of members in that House had formed a design of removing them from their situations, and that an ill opinion had been universally entertained of their measures. Therefore it became necessary to blacken the character of that man who was the most likely to be placed at the head of those who should succeed them. The

suggested any thing like a condition. You say that Mr. *Sheridan* has been traduced as wishing to abandon Mr. *Fox*, and to promote a new administration. I had accidentally a conversation with that gentleman at the House of Lords. I remonstrated strongly with him against a principle which I heard Mr. *Fox's* friends intended to lay down, namely, that they would support a new administration, but that not any of them would take part in it. I solemnly declare upon my honour, that I could not shake Mr. *Sheridan's* assertion of the propriety of that determination. He said that he and Mr. *Fox's* other friends, as well as Mr. *Fox* himself, would give the most energetic support to such an administration as was in contemplation; but that their acceptance of office would appear an acquiescence under the injustice of the interdict supposed to be fixed upon Mr. *Fox*. I did not, and never can, admit the fairness of that argument. But I gained nothing upon Mr. *Sheridan*; to whose uprightness in that respect I can therefore bear the most decisive testimony. Indeed, I am ashamed of offering testimony where suspicion ought not to be conceived. I consider the whole of this political negotiation as completely extinct; and feeling my escape from a hazardous and unpleasant situation, I enjoy the consciousness of not having shrunk in an unmanly manner from any responsibility in a case where it was thought I might be useful to the community. Adieu, my dear sir. Believe me faithfully yours,

(Signed) "MOIRA."

same alarming expressions which lately fell from his right hon. friend had formerly been used to as great an extent by the present chancellor of the exchequer, and also by the late lord *Camelford*. He would leave it to his right hon. friend to explain what he meant by that alarming expression, and proceed to state to the House in what manner he himself understood it. By a radical reform, then, he meant that kind of reform out of which must grow the means of destroying all the abuses and corruptions which deformed the constitution. He meant, by a radical reform, to give to every inhabitant householder of Great Britain the right of voting for a member of parliament, and that new parliaments should be more frequent than they were at present. He meant to take away from private individuals the power of nominating members of parliament. This was an object which he had long pursued; and if any thing was wanting to strengthen his zeal on that occasion, it was the conduct uniformly pursued by his majesty's present administration. There was another reform, without which it will be impossible for the House of commons ever to preserve its independence, and that was the putting a stop to the unlimited creation of peers.

The right hon. gentleman spoke with exultation about the prophecies concerning the Bank not being fulfilled. But what was it that gave credit to bank notes, but the association of monied men in the city, who had agreed to take them instead of cash, and who had it also in their power to destroy the same, by refusing them? If ever a panic should seize on the country, it would be seen what value was attached to Bank notes. It was also a breach of national faith to pay to the stockholder his dividend in paper.—With respect to the necessity of the present bill, it ought to appear that the advantages arising from it would be greater than the injury that would ensue to the country from the depreciation of the funds in case of the whole of the supplies being raised by a loan. He was sure the chancellor of the exchequer could with ease procure a loan of twenty millions. But because the person who held stock since the year 1792, lost by the depreciation of the funds about half his property, the right hon. gentleman, in tenderness to him, must also take away one-tenth of his income; whereas it would be less injurious to him to take a certain portion of his stock. It was singular that

the chancellor of the exchequer should abandon the funding system at a time when its continuance was so necessary to the preservation of his own country; after having so lately as eight months ago invited the Emperor to have a loan funded here; and having funded another loan for Ireland. If ever there was a war, the expense of which ought to be borne by posterity, it was the present; which was said to be for the preservation of that which was to be enjoyed by future generations. It was impossible to prevent the bill from having a partial and unjust operation. The ratio was so capricious and uncertain, that the circumstance of a man having a silver watch, or not having one, might make a difference of 50*l.* in the tax he was to pay to government. And it was still more unjust by not going above a certain rank, so that the burthen on such a man as the marquis of Buckingham, would be trifling when compared with his immense income. And no man could have a greater interest in the preservation of good order, religion, laws, and liberty, than such persons as he; and the royal family still more than any, although they paid no tax at all. Another instance of injustice in the bill was, that if from the evasions of some persons, it should fail in its effect, then the deficiency was to be made up by those who acted honestly and fairly. A minor could not pay his due proportion; and men's families were to be taxed after their death, which was a species of cruelty that would be severely felt by many genteel families. His objections against all the clauses and amendments were equally strong, because they went against the principle of the bill itself. He saw no reason why physicians' carriages should be exempted. In short, there was no way of making the tax equal, but by laying a per centage on people's incomes. There was no point of view, however, in which the bill appeared more alarming than in the effect it was likely to have in abridging all the other sources of the revenue. Retrenchments in articles of consumption and luxury would begin to take place, when men should be driven to it by the pressure of the bill. There were many appendages which gentlemen could do without, but which, from pride, and a desire of making that appearance in the world without which they might be pointed at as persons of an inferior condition, they were not able to lay aside. But the moment that pride was destroyed—the mo-

ment gentlemen were driven to seclusion and economy—that moment the source of revenue was gone. It would press peculiarly hard upon magistrates of limited income, who would now be obliged to quit their family seats, which they had inhabited many years with credit to themselves and the esteem of the neighbourhood, to reside in towns. Did they consider how this would degrade the magistracy? Nor would clergymen be exempt from the same difficulty. The man of small estate also, who by economy was able to educate his children in a superior style, and once in eight or nine years indulge himself with a journey to London, would fall a sacrifice to this measure; for he would not only be obliged to renounce all his pleasures and amusements, but if he had not ready money by him for the payment to the collector, he must mortgage his estate; and then where would he provide money, unless he availed himself of a clause in the bill, and got it from his tenants? Such men, however, were frequently very proud; but though their pride was of the highest, it was of the noblest nature, inasmuch as it struggled secretly with difficulties to support a decent appearance, and preserve the respect and esteem of their parishioners. Did the right hon. gentleman then, consider the pangs which he would give to such a man by the operation of this bill? Because it did not suit the right hon. gentleman to fund seven millions, so many people were to be subjected to these difficulties.—He would now state why he was anxious the crown should pay a tenth part as well as any other. As far as the influence of the crown went, its patronage was stronger than ever; and he did not think they should increase the influence of the crown while they were increasing the wants of the people. He next wished to know how they would adopt an arbitrary taxation. Did they believe any wise or thinking man among the monied interest would not hereafter see the necessity of concealing his property? He would consider his having kept a carriage as a misfortune, since that was taken as a criterion of his wealth, and subjected him to the payment of a tenth of his income. In future, therefore, he would conceal, or remit his money to foreign countries, lest it should hereafter subject him to a farther assessment.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, he was not afraid to declare, in the face of all the miscon-

struction, to which he knew he should expose himself by such a declaration, that he had felt many and great doubts of the wisdom and expediency of the present measure, and that, notwithstanding the modifications it had received, many, and those powerful objections, yet remained against it. To the oath, he felt the strongest repugnance, especially as the breach of it was not to be attended with the usual penalties of perjury. He could not approve of the proportions of the rates which were to be levied; he thought, that the burthen would press too heavily on the middle classes; and not with sufficient weight on the highest. Feeling the force of the above objections to the measure under discussion, he certainly had hesitated in making up his mind how he ought to act in the present instance; but on the whole, he was convinced he ought to give the measure his support. To the principle of it he had been uniformly friendly. He thought, that, in the present circumstances of the country, it was right to resort to a more effectual expedient than the usual one of funding; and it was even one of his objections to the plan now proposed, that it did not go far enough, or sufficiently meet the exigencies of the present times. Great as was the importance of this measure in its own nature, it was now become a matter of increased importance, on account of the principles on which it had been opposed, and the important interests which it involved. By the gentlemen opposite, it was opposed distinctly on the ground of the present administration having so far forfeited the confidence of the House of Commons, that it was no longer right to trust them with any farther supplies. If the present measure should be rejected on such principles, it would be impossible for ministers to provide the means of carrying on with due energy the dangerous contest in which we were engaged. The question was not a mere comparison of two different plans of finance; but whether a great effort should be made under the conduct of the present administration, or whether they would throw the administration of affairs into the hands of their opponents, of whom they had been used to entertain diffidence and ill opinion. Thinking as the people had done, of the conduct of opposition, what had passed lately had not tended to alter their opinion. And in particular their conduct in seceding from parliament, under all the cir-

cumstances which attended it, appeared he believed to them, as it certainly did to himself, one of the most criminal and mischievous of their proceedings. It would be easy to prove that their secession was directly subversive of the first principles of representative government. But that which had always most forcibly struck his mind was, the time and the circumstances under which it took place. It was not merely that it was a period of war, when we were pressed by a foreign enemy; it was not merely that it was in a state of great financial distress, when the Bank had ceased to pay in cash; it was not merely that a most dangerous mutiny was then raging in the fleet; all this would have been much—but that which above all the rest, impressed his mind, was this; that when every attempt had been systematically making to alienate the affections of the people from the constitution, and to make them look any where rather than to the House of Commons for a redress of grievances, the opposition should lend their aid to these dangerous suggestions, by seceding the very night after the rejection of the motion for the reform of parliament. What was this but as much as could be, to declare, by their actions, that the House of Commons was no longer a fit organ of the public voice; that it no longer ought to be regarded as the guardian of the public interest; in short what was it but to throw a doubt upon its acts and virtually to deny its legislative competency. What an impression must conduct like this be calculated to produce? The question was one, which it did not lay with him to answer. He must remind the House of the impression which it had produced on other spectators, and that the French Directory had conceived from their language and their actions, that they were friendly to its cause. He begged gentlemen would reflect, who it was that had stated this impression to have been made upon them; not low and vulgar men, with small opportunities of knowledge, or of casual or superficial attention to our political transactions; but the governors of a neighbouring country, men of discernment and intelligence, and likely, from a sense of personal interest, to pay the closest attention to what passed among us. Surely this was an impression which would not be effaced by the language which had been used in the present debate. One hon. gentleman indeed had treated the subject with his accustomed plea-

santry; and if he himself had come for the first time that night into the House, doubtless he should have been ready to exclaim, "Surely nothing can be more innocent; surely no mischievous construction can be drawn from any thing so pleasant and facetious!" To the uncommon powers of wit of the hon. member, he paid no unwilling testimony; nor at a proper time and place was there any one who would be more entertained by it. But he knew from long experience that it was the habit of that hon. gentleman to clothe the most dangerous declarations with an air of pleasantry and good humour: but the point of the epigram remained long after the joke with which it had been invested had passed away and been forgotten. Language and conduct of this sort had, in his opinion, a manifest tendency to realise the worst horrors of the French revolution. On the whole, therefore, the question was this, whether the House or the country should or should not subscribe to the opinion, that the present administration had so far forfeited their confidence that no farther supplies should be committed to their management. No man regretted more than himself that habit so prevalent on both sides of the House of deciding every question with party views and on party principles. He thought it would not be difficult to prove, that to party spirit were to be ascribed, in a great measure, the evils which we suffered, and those which are apprehended. But it would be weak and childish in any public man not to open his eyes to the real state of the case before them. Doing this it was, that he had declared the measure to have assumed even an increased magnitude from the principles on which it had been opposed; and however he must confess it to be objectionable on various grounds, he felt himself bound on the whole not to reject it.

Mr. Fox spoke as follows:—It gives me pain that I am obliged to rise at so late an hour, and that I shall be under the necessity of trespassing on the time of the House for a considerable while; but, from the very peculiar situation in which I stand, it is unavoidable—charges of the most direct and personal nature have been made against me, and I am sorry I have not heard the whole of them. I understand that in my absence, on former occasions, as well as during the debate of last night, charges and insinuations have been thrown out; and a very considerable

part of the debate this evening has been applied personally to me. The hon. gentleman who spoke last has made a speech which is a little singular in its turn at the commencement, when compared to what followed: he lamented the mischiefs, was alarmed, it seems, to a fatal degree, at the probable effect of my introducing into almost every debate in which I happen to take a share, party disputes and personal animosities. How far his speech was calculated to prevent that mischief, is, I presume, a point that needs no argument. Indeed, if that speech could be disposed of, as we do sometimes with bills in this House; that is, if the preamble of it could be postponed, it might, by going into a committee upon it, be proved to be one of the most extraordinary performances that ever was exhibited in this House. I return, it seems, to this House to show my animosity against the minister, not my zeal for the public good. He thinks himself justifiable in arraigning me, as it were, upon a bill of indictment, for neglect of duty, and for being a candidate for office. He is pleased to censure, not members generally for their conduct, but particular individuals, whom he chooses to suppose are candidates for office. Does he know that I am a candidate for office? Does he know who are candidates for office? We arraign the ministers, it seems, not because their measures are bad, but because we wish to supplant them. Is he sure of that? He ought to be so before he makes the assertion. Is he sure there is any temptation for it? He ought to be well acquainted with our conduct before he ventures to throw forth such accusations. But who is he, and who are his connections? Upon what grounds of justice or of modesty does he assert that he has any knowledge of the motives, or the secret wishes of those into whose company he is never admitted, whose confidence he never possessed? Upon what authority does he make his accusations? Upon what foundation does he rest his unqualified assertions? He is connected with other individuals; and to serve them, as he supposes, rather than touch upon the contents of a bill which he cannot support, he changes the subject of debate from the bill to that of the conduct of individuals, for the purpose of diverting the House from the discussion of the measure which is now before them. He chooses to say we are candidates for office; I do not know whether he is not a candidate: I am sure

he cannot know whether I am so or not. He seems to feel quite at his ease in deciding, not merely on the characters of men, but also on the degree of public confidence they possess. He dares take upon himself to say who has and who has not the confidence of the public; and that with as much ease as if he had certain means of knowing the fact. He asserts, roundly, that the public have a bad opinion of us. Who has commissioned him to say so? From what society, from what company, of which he is a member, has the fact been communicated to him? Is it from his friends on the Treasury bench? When he talks of me in the manner that he does, he ought to be sure that he is borne out by something that has the colour, at least, of truth. I do not like, Sir, to talk of myself, but the hon. gentleman has made it a duty, which is unpleasant to me, as I hope, it is uncommon to all men. I am member for a city, in all respects important; in some respects, and particularly from the aspect of this bill, the most important in this kingdom, because the inhabitants of that city are to be more cruelly harassed by the enactments of it than any other class of persons upon whom it will operate. Does he mean to say that the opinion which he has delivered concerning me, is the opinion of my constituents? Will he try it by the best test, by the result of a general meeting of my constituents convened, after due notice, for the express purpose of deliberating on the present measure? Will he take it from their parochial meetings? He presumes to say, that there are members in this House who are arrogant. Sir, I trust it is not my general character to be remarkably arrogant, although I know he intended to direct that insinuation towards me; but I will say now, since he drives me to it, that I am aware I am sent into this House with more of the affection of my constituents than the hon. gentleman, or any of those who sit around him; that there is not in this House one man who has more of the affection of his constituents than the member who has now the honour of addressing you. I refer to those who know me best, and who know me certainly much better than the hon. member can pretend to do, to vouch for me in this particular. They have done it in the most explicit manner; they are ready to do it again if that should be thought necessary. "The people of this country have an ill opinion of me!"

Where has the hon. gentleman collected that fact? It has been quite otherwise expressed by those who are full as capable of judging of the matter as he is; for much of my labour has been employed in their service. Has he found any indication any where, that the public at large are displeased with my conduct? But he speaks the language, or rather the common cant of the majority of this House, the drift of which I think I understand full as well as he does. It is a cant which has no connexion with the sentiments of the people. Some men in this House say, that ministers have the full confidence of the people. Were I to follow the examples that are set me, I might say that the public have a very ill opinion of these same ministers. Sir, I never intended to be deficient in the duty I owe the sovereign; but how many times more frequently within the last year than I should have had occasion to attend the levee have I been called upon by different descriptions of his subjects to present to his majesty petitions for the removal of his ministers, and that too from some of the most important districts in his majesty's dominions! By these petitions, not the general confidence, but the general distrust of the people in the present ministers has been unequivocally expressed. Let those who doubt this refer to the transactions of the last summer. I may be told, that "petitions against ministers are nothing to this House; that it will judge for itself, and that it confides still in the ministers." This is the fashionable language of the day, nor could any thing else be expected after the repeal of the Bill of Rights. Hence we see that petitions against any branch of the executive authority are regarded as nothing; those that are for any part of it, every thing. But if after the repeal of the Bill of Rights, for the substance of it is repealed; if after all the disadvantages which the people labour under, they will nevertheless express a general opinion against ministers; is it not clear that such is a sincere opinion? If, under all the difficulties that are thrown in the way of those, who meet to deliberate on public affairs, men will meet, and will declare their sentiments to be hostile to those who have so much power to injure them, what would they not do, if left, as heretofore, to their own free will? We have now, indeed, a form of government, consisting of King, Lords, and Commons' House of Parliament; but

not a government, consisting of King, Lords, and the Commons, representatives of the people of Great Britain. It is a government in which the power of the people is nothing; and so, indeed, it is the fashion now to admit, for we never hear now of an actual, all is a virtual, representation of the people; consequently we find daily, that members of this House speak and vote in direct opposition to the instructions of their constituents; of which we had a striking instance the other day in the conduct of a worthy alderman of the city of London, who thought fit to declare, that in voting for the bill now before the House, he was confident he was voting contrary to the desire of his constituents. Who are his constituents? The livery of London. What has been the conduct of that livery? In common-hall assembled they voted an address to his majesty to dismiss his present ministers from his councils. That worthy alderman has since continually supported these ministers in this House. The court of common council unanimously resolve against the principle of this bill. The body of the livery in common-hall, and all the inhabitants of the different wards in the city concur unanimously in these sentiments—they all instruct their representatives to oppose this bill—the worthy alderman supports it. This is called the virtual representation of the people! Such is the conduct, I perceive, of many of the members of this House at the beginning of a parliament; quite otherwise it is with most of them at the end of one. What was this but saying to their constituents, that their member knew better than themselves what their opinions were? What was this but following up the blow that had been already given to the right of petitioning? Not so the case with regard to petitions in the year 1784, when they came in aid of the power of the crown. Whether the petitions that were then presented were right or wrong, I am not now questioning; it is foreign to the subject; but it appears by the different receptions of them, and of those of the present time, that, in this House, petitions in favour of the power of the crown are to be considered as every thing; those in favour of the rights of the subject, nothing. While the majority of this House was against the proceedings of the king's ministers, it was nothing, and the petitions of the people against it was every thing. When the majority of this House is for

the king's ministers, it is every thing; the petitions of the people against them nothing. I protest I cannot account for this in any other way than that of supposing that there is a settled plan to exalt the prerogatives of the crown, and to reduce the rights of the people to a cypher. Nay, is it not already done? What is the condition of the prerogative, or rather the influence of the minister, at this moment; and what is the power of the people? I protest I cannot account for the turn which this debate has taken: I cannot account for the violent invectives that have been urged against me, especially this night, upon any other principle than that to which I have already alluded. Why should the hon. gentleman who spoke last be so violent against me, who have had the good fortune to agree with him on many subjects that were introduced into this House by himself? How, but by supposing that he lends himself as an instrument to the minister, to do any thing that he thinks will serve his instructor, and therefore he attempts now to divert the attention of the public from the subject of the present bill, to those points which he chooses to state as my political defects. He imputes to me now an eagerness for office, with just as much justice as, in the year 1784, he lent himself as an instrument to the minister to say, and to prevail upon the people of this country, and especially those of Yorkshire, to believe, that I was desirous to seize upon all power, and that finally I aimed at sitting upon the throne. By this sort of conduct he has compelled me to-night to speak of myself as an individual. He has made it necessary also that I should now speak of another individual, and that is himself; and here I will declare, that I do not know a man in this House who is so ready upon all occasions, to lend himself to ministers, to profess himself to believe what they profess to believe, to distrust what they say they distrust, or to allege, for them, what he does not know to be true; or, in short, to lend himself as a tool or instrument to ministers upon any occasion in which they may call for his assistance. I say I know no man more ready to do all this than the hon. gentleman himself, and that for the most contemptible party purposes. I cannot help making this observation: it is the effect of his unqualified assertions.

But the hon. gentleman has lent himself this night a little more to his instructor

than upon any former occasion. He insinuated a great deal, or thought he did so, by speaking against the doctrines which led to the worst horrors that were produced in France, "which," said, he "we all deplore, or all say we deplore." Does he think there is, within these walls, any man who, more sincerely than myself, deplores those horrors? I deplore these horrors, but the insinuation I do not deplore. He does not himself believe it; he cannot believe it. He lends himself a little too much to make insinuations, for which he knows there is no foundation, merely to lower the personal opinion which the public may have of us. Upon that subject I should not have said much, nor, indeed, any thing, if that hon. gentleman had not made it necessary. But an expression fell last night from a learned doctor (Laurence), of whom I shall speak only in terms of respect, having formerly had the honour to be acquainted with him. He spoke of the parliament in the time of Charles 1st. That parliament, the learned gentleman admitted to have done a great number of good acts, although it afterwards stained its proceedings with an act of the most horrible injustice. Thus it appears that that learned gentleman can speak well of those acts which deserve to be well spoken of, although they were the acts of those who committed afterwards an act of regicide; but that is matter of history, and of which men of all parties can now judge coolly, because their prejudices and passions are not now called into action upon the subject. If that learned gentleman had said this of the parliament of Charles the 1st in the reign of Charles 2nd, no doubt his sentiments would have been called rebellious, for it would have then been said by the cavaliers that he approved of the death of the king. This would have been all the effect of prejudice, for nobody could suspect that learned gentleman of any such desire as that of accomplishing the death of the king. Such is the difference between matter of history and that, which is passing before us. That very learned gentleman, who could thus praise some of the acts of a regicide parliament, can make no allowance for those who approve of the first principles that were maintained in France: they must be charged with the guilty desire of abetting all the horrors that appeared since in that country, although, in reality, they deplore them as much as

that learned gentleman can do. I do not blame that learned gentleman for approving of some of the acts of the parliament of Charles 1st, for they laid the foundation of that glorious revolution which asserted the liberties of England; but I think that the same allowance should be made by him to us with regard to the first principles of the French revolution: we certainly might approve of them, without approving of the horrors by which it has been followed up. But when we speak of history, we speak coolly; when we speak of events that are passing before us, we speak of them with the blindness of prejudice.

I now come to complain a little of the conduct of an hon. and learned gentleman (Mr. Perceval) who has made a very ingenious speech this night. I did not call him to order, although, perhaps, I might have done so with propriety, for much of his address to the House was irregular; but I abstained from that, as I am desirous to afford to every member, considerable latitude of expression in all cases; and I was the more so in this, because he did me the honour to take notice of my public conduct. He applied his argument to what had occurred in a former debate, not upon this subject, but another. That is certainly disorderly, but I do not complain of it, because I think, that however useful order in debate may be sometimes, it is necessary it should give way in others. He complained of the ambiguity of my words on a former debate. Why did he not make the complaint earlier? Why take three weeks to make an epigram upon a sentence in my speech? If this would have been blameable in any man, how much more so was it in that learned gentleman, because he adverted to my absence from the House, for he said, "God knows whether I shall see that right hon. gentleman again until the next session." I think therefore he was bound, on his own principle, to take notice of my words (which it seems have alarmed him so much) immediately after they were spoken, for how did he know he should see me again in this House? He did not arraign the expressions when they were uttered; but now, at the end of three weeks, they recur to his memory with dreadful alarm!—I am now coming to these formidable words which have created this great alarm; but as I have already been accused of being an egotist, I must beg pardon of the House for recurring to

any thing I said of myself, and I wish the learned gentleman had noticed them at the time, that I might have had an opportunity of explaining them if they were ambiguous, or correcting them if they were wrong. They were uttered, I remember, in answer to some insinuation, that I was a candidate for public employment, and was ambitious of public honours. I do not pretend to have a very good memory of the precise words of any man, especially of my own, but I think the words I used were these—"that a radical reform both of the representation of the people in parliament, and of the abuses that have crept into the practice of the constitution of this country, together with a complete and fundamental change of system of administration, must take place, and that until it did, I, for one, would take no share in any administration, or be responsible in any office in his majesty's councils." I think these were my words; I am sure they were the substance of what I said. Was there any explanation necessary? I am not very dexterous at any thing, but I ought to be so at explanation, and perhaps the learned gentleman gives me credit for being so, because he may think it impossible for a man who has been so often misrepresented as I have been not to have acquired some art in making his defence. I must confess it is an art in which I believe the right hon. gentleman opposite to me is my superior, and that if I wished to acquire perfection in that art, I should, although the elder man, become the scholar of that right hon. gentleman. Was there any thing ambiguous in these words—"a radical reform," or, as the learned gentleman pleased to call it, "a fundamental and total change of the system upon which our affairs have been carried on?" By a change of system I meant, simply and clearly, to state, that the empire should be governed by a system of liberty, instead of a system of restraint. Is the sense obscure, or are the words ambiguous? Whether my opinion is right or wrong, is quite another question. I say, that to increase the power of the crown, and to abridge the liberties of the people, has been the system of the present administration. I say that it is a wrong system. I say you should diminish the power of the crown, and increase the power of the people. I say you should restore them to their just balance according to the true spirit of our constitution.

I say, that it is essential to the happiness of the king and the people. I take it for granted that the words I used are now perfectly understood; and I thought, at the time I used them, that instead of being liable to reproach, they merited quite another fate. What did I mean by a change of system? What! exactly what lord Chatham meant when he said the same thing—"not merely a removal of ministers, but a fundamental change of system upon conviction of past error." I meant what lord Camelford meant when he declared, and that at a time when we were threatened with an invasion, "I will not vote for a supply to be granted to his majesty now."* What! was this an encouragement to the French to invade this country? No; no! He meant, and he so expressed himself, that he would not vote for a supply, until a pledge was given him, not merely that ministers should be removed, but that there should be a complete change of system in our foreign and domestic government. This speech was much praised at the time, and has often been stated to be the speech of the chancellor of the exchequer. It was not so. It was the speech of Mr. Thomas Pitt, afterwards lord Camelford. I believe the present chancellor of the exchequer did not speak in that debate, but we had the honour of his countenance, and, I think, the concurrence of his vote; I am sure he did not think Mr. Thomas Pitt a dangerous man on account of that declaration; for one of the first acts of his administration was, to promote Mr. Thomas Pitt to the dignity of a peerage, at a time when peerages were not made by dozens, but when a peerage was the reward of some worthy service, or at least bestowed with delicacy, and was an honour to the man who had it. That was the language of lord Camelford then. That was also my language then, and is my language now. If my opinion is wrong, that is another point, and a fit one for discussion. What danger is there in my saying, of the present ministers, what I said of former ministers? Was it imputed to lord Camelford, that by resisting the supplies he voted for delivering up this country to the French, the Spaniards, or the Dutch, who were then our enemies as they are now? Nobody ever imputed any such thing to him. He said by that vote, "I know it will be of service to his majesty himself, as well as to his

* See Vol. 22, p. 714.

subjects, to call upon him to dismiss his present ministers." But, in truth, I am guilty of plagiarism, and still more guilty of repetition, by the assertion I have made concerning a radical reform. We are all guilty of it, on this side of the House, and so is the chancellor of the exchequer. As to myself, I have not only pleaded my guilt twenty different times, in twenty different speeches, but I have actually recorded my guilt. I should have supposed, that what I have repeated so often in this House, year after year, and which is to be found on the Journals of this House, cannot be novel now. As long as I stated the necessity of reforming abuses in general; while I said there must be "a change of measures," a "radical change of system," there was no alarm taken; but when I came to specify a parliamentary reform, then every thing I said became dangerous and alarming; my words became then ambiguous and mystical. Why should that which I have so often insisted upon, be now so dangerous in the repetition? I had the honour of moving in this House, in May 1796, that which I will now read: "On a review of so many instances of gross and flagrant misconduct proceeding from the same pernicious principles, and directed with incorrigible obstinacy to the same mischievous ends, we deem ourselves bound, in duty to his majesty and to our constituents, to declare that we see no rational hope of redeeming the affairs of the kingdom, but by the adoption of a system radically and fundamentally different from that which has produced our present calamities."*

"Radically and fundamentally different;" am I not justified by the words of that address, at least excused from any danger of novelty, in what I said concerning radical reform? There surely must be some reason for taking this up now as a novel and alarming doctrine. Why, Sir, it is not difficult to find the cause of all this pretended apprehension of danger from my expression. The chancellor of the exchequer finds his popularity is gone, that it is succeeded by public odium. He remembers what success he had at the time of passing the treason and sedition bills; in calling the public attention to my expressions instead of his own bills, he perverted my meaning, affixed to my words a dangerous tendency, and directed the public mind from the subject, which

he knew would not bear close inspection. I am not so destitute of plain common sense, as not to be able to see the drift of his little artifice. The minister is in a dilemma; his popularity is gone; public odium is coming on; his bill is detested; he now endeavours to excite an alarm from my expressions, weakly and vainly imagining, that by blackening me he can render himself tolerable. I spoke these words plainly, "that the constitution should be restored to its just balance, and the power of the people that which they enjoyed in a former part of his majesty's reign." The chancellor of the exchequer affected to show some absurdity in these words. "What," said he, "is all this to be done merely to keep things as they are?" To which I answered, "No; it is not to keep things as they are, but to restore them to what they were." I hope the hon. and learned gentleman is now satisfied, and that he will no longer state my words as ambiguous, since they must now appear to him as well as to every body else, plain and intelligible. I see some stress is laid on the word "radical." Some may possibly suppose that I mean a reform similar to that which many have thought to be the best, that of universal suffrage. Now, having supported the scheme of my hon. friend (Mr. Grey) in this House, I have by that conduct pointed out that I do not approve of the plan of universal suffrage, and have shown the plan of which I do approve. The learned gentleman was pleased to play upon the words, "radical and fundamental," and say that they meant to strike at the root—to alter the foundation of our constitution. No, to strike at the root, to alter the foundation of abuses. To destroy the monarchy—No, to support it, by changing the system that has brought this country to the brink of ruin. There are some gentlemen opposite to me, who have not forgotten the whole of their former politics, and to whom this doctrine is not new. It is not free-masonry; it may be divulged any where and to any person; it is to do what Mr. Burke, what the duke of Portland, what earl Spencer, and what the right hon. gentleman opposite have declared essential to the interests of their country. They all declared they thought that these abuses produced the American war; and Mr. Burke published his sentiments upon that subject, in a work called "Thoughts on the present Discontents." The whole of our politics at that time

* See Vol. 32, p. 1123.

were directed, as mine are still, against the root of these evils—evils which it is the ambition of my life, and was once the ambition of the lives of others, to oppose. There are many gentlemen on the other side, who cannot think that the events of the year 1784, weaken these observations: they must know they strengthen them; but they think that the revolution in France has made it necessary to overlook the whole of this system of abuses. They fear what the Latins call *probabilis*; but they must know, that there is such a system, and they must know that although they abandon their opposition to it, I shall persevere. Now, what have I done which all the Whigs of England have not constantly and uniformly declared to be absolutely necessary for the safety of the state? The only addition I have made, is that of calling for a reform in parliament; and although it is my opinion now, that it is impossible to correct abuses without parliamentary reform, I confess I once thought otherwise, and that some abuses might be corrected without it. I may be asked, “Why do you, who did not always think it absolutely necessary that there should be a parliamentary reform in order to correct abuses, now hold forth that it is absolutely impossible to correct abuses without parliamentary reform?” To which I answer, “I have no difficulty in saying, that formerly I thought it only useful—that it was likely to do much good, and that it was impossible it could produce any evil, I never thought the propriety of it doubtful; but there was a time when I did not think it a matter of absolute necessity; that this country, though not so well, yet might stand without it.” This was my opinion. The right hon. gentleman opposite to me was of another opinion, for he said in substance, (I do not pretend to quote words accurately) that “without a parliamentary reform, no good administration could render any service to the country, and without parliamentary reform the country could not be saved against a bad administration.” I heard that part of his speech with pleasure, although I did not go the full length of it in point of opinion. It was in part a compliment to myself; it conveyed an idea, that the then administration was, in his opinion, a good one, and I had the honour to hold a share in it. Such was the opinion of the chancellor of the exchequer at that time. He said that “without a parliamentary reform there

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could be no security for the future,” (mark the words!) “no security for the future.” He looked forward like our ancestors, and called for security against probable evils. He said that parliamentary reform was the only security against a repetition of such calamities as were brought upon us by the American war. I am convinced by experience. This House, and this country must be convinced by experience. The right hon. gentleman’s administration has convinced us all, that he was then right in his assertion, for we now feel a much greater evil than the American war.—But it may be said, that this war is very different from any other war, and therefore it is not just to compare it to any other calamity. No two human events are exactly alike; but in their principle they are exactly the same, and they have produced similar effects. The American war was commenced to crush the principles of rising liberty. The calamities of that war, I am sorry to say, more than the principle of it, rendered it unpopular. It brought Ireland into a state of discontent, which could not be set at rest, without either vigorous measures, or conciliation on the part of government. What is the origin of this war? An attempt to stifle the genius of pretended liberty; to check, if you please, the progress of false and presumptuous philosophy. A war which was by artifice made popular for a while in this country, and most unfortunately for us all, popular in this House. Here, again the calamity, and not the principle of the measure, rendered it unpopular. The people became generally discontented. They wished for peace. Ministers opposed their desires. They, very generally, and under great discouragements, petitioned the throne to change these ministers. They were not attended to. This has brought on your present most dreadful crisis. In the American war Ireland was appeased by conciliation. Ireland has now been goaded to distraction. Earl Fitzwilliam, with the most virtuous intentions, made to the Irish people promises which he thought he was empowered to fulfil. These promises have been broken by ministers. The Irish people have been scourged by the iron hand of oppression, and subjected to the horrors of military execution, and are now in a situation too dreadful for the mind to contemplate without dismay, or the heart to feel without horror. That country, instead of being part of the strength, is

part of the weakness of our empire, as well as its calamity. I cannot help thinking, therefore, that from these features of our situation, the right hon. gentleman's predictions are completely verified, "that without reform of parliament there is no security to this country from being ruined by a bad administration."

An hon. gentleman who spoke early in this debate thought fit to make an attack on what he called the secession. "This took place," says he, "in times of great difficulty and danger." There certainly is great difficulty and danger; but the question is, whether my attendance in this House can remove that difficulty, or provide against that danger? But as there are many gentlemen in this House who are not partial to my authority in any thing, I will refer them to the authority of others. In the year 1777 the opposition, consisting of the marquis of Rockingham—whose name I can never mention but with emotions of esteem and affection; whose worth, like that of most extraordinary men, was not so well valued in his life time as it has been since his death—lord John Cavendish, sir George Savile, and Mr. Burke—I do not mention myself among them—all thought that—in the middle of the American war, when great loans were to be raised, and when the country was in great difficulty—they could not do better than discontinue their attendance in parliament, when neither their virtues nor their talents could be useful, and after both had been exerted in vain. I ceased to think with them on the propriety of staying away, and therefore came down to this House before them; but I never blamed them for their conduct, nor is their conduct blamed now. So it seems, that what was right and honourable in these persons is factious in me. In my own instance I am particularly unfortunate. I can please my adversaries in no way. They say there is mischief in my staying away, and they accuse me of producing mischief by my speeches. They are neither pleased with my presence nor my absence. "What are his motives for staying away?" Upon my word, Sir, I will not flatter the hon. gentleman who spoke last by telling him that he is the cause either of my presence or my absence. But if I was obliged to attend much to him when I am present, he would be the cause of either my absence or my presence—perhaps he can guess which. I cannot state any thing in this House in

favour of a parliamentary reform without his telling me I afford encouragement to the French. Why, then, Sir, if I paid that respect to his authority which I dare say he thinks it deserves, I should stay away. "No, I must attend." But then I must either be silent or speak as he pleases. I shall follow my own judgment while that is not disagreeable to my constituents, and I will not so far flatter the hon. gentleman as to say that I should either serve or please my constituents by following his directions. I apply this observation to several other members of this House, and among the rest to the hon. member for Lincoln. Is there not something of self at the bottom of all this seeming anxiety for my conduct? I know not whether it is from my depriving them of their opportunities, their glorious, and to some of them, golden opportunities, of gratifying their vanity or their avarice. When I consider these matters I do not see any great reason for wondering that so many gentlemen should be angry with me for my absence; but to be plain with them, I am not very anxious about pleasing them. The gentleman who spoke last says, that the people of this country in general are dissatisfied with my absence. I should wish to have a better authority than his before I arrive at that conclusion. The people I represent, who are, without disparagement, fully as good judges of that as the hon. gentleman, have told me otherwise; and I think I can rely on their veracity also as much as upon his. Another hon. gentleman tells us, 'that we are neglecting our duty while others are performing theirs.' By duty, I presume, he means attending and dividing with the minister. I made no general allegation that the members do not attend; the meaning of what I said was, that when they are here they do not always perform their duty. The learned gentleman, whose speech imputed to us party violence, said, that the public look at us, and will judge of our conduct. I hope they do; and without vanity, I wish they may. There is nothing that I more desire than that the people of this country should look at, and carefully examine, our conduct, and the conduct of the House of Commons. I wish them to judge, and to judge candidly, whether this is such a House of Commons, as, that in it, those who think like me, can procure any advantage to the public by their attendance. "But you still keep your seat in parliament," say

they. Why yes, I do Sir, and I have no intention of applying to the right hon. gentleman opposite to me for the Chiltern hundreds in order to vacate that seat. Why? Because I do not think that such a step would be of any service to the people. Am I to despair that even this House of Commons may change its sentiments? Is that change impossible? I hope not. I believe not. Then why should I resign a situation, which although now useless, may hereafter be useful to my country? "But you stay away because you know you cannot obtain a parliamentary reform: you say that reform is absolutely necessary, and therefore you do not mean to try for a parliamentary reform in this House?" To which I answer, I know no other legal way, because I know no other peaceable way of obtaining a reform, and therefore I shall never try any other way. I confess I am not very sanguine in my expectations of the House of Commons; but I think it may, from circumstances, commence measures which may lead to an entire and radical reform. "But you do not expect to be able to persuade the House of Commons to commence this work." Why no, not by my speeches certainly; and yet I think they may be persuaded. How? By the public. I hope such an opinion will be so expressed as to induce this House to see the wisdom and necessity of the measure; and I am afraid it will never appear to this House to be wise, before it appears to be absolutely necessary. I have done my duty in impressing this opinion upon the House. But why should I, by my attendance from day to day, give countenance to the idea that there is, in this House, a free unbiassed opinion, and that it is not under the influence of the crown? I am not of high authority, but that authority, such as it is, I should be sorry to pledge to the doctrine, that the branches of the legislature are not under the control of the executive power. I believe that those, if there are any, who think that the legislative power is not under the control and management of the crown, know but little of the real condition of this, or the other House of Parliament. I say so, because I think so. Then why should I not absent myself from such a parliament, as I think proper. But they say that my constituents sent me here; and that I am not to follow my own inclination, but should attend for their interests. I beg to appeal to my constituents, and to none but them,

for with their desires I am ready to comply. My attendance this night in this House is an instance of that compliance. But how stands this language with regard to constituents? There are many counties large and populous, the electors of which may call upon their representatives to obey them, and they may do so; but with regard to this House at large, I should be glad to know how many members there are whose constituents have no influence whatever over them, because, between them there is not so much as the appearance of connexion; and even where the case is otherwise, where the connexion is supposed to be intimate, how many members are there in this House who have disobeyed the express directions of their constituents? "But you are speaking on one side only. It is true the king has the prerogative of declaring war and proclaiming peace, which may create some influence; but if a war be improperly declared, or peace improperly delayed, this House has the power of withholding the supplies." O! mighty well, I know it: but if the minister can influence the majority and obtain their votes, what then becomes of your famous check upon the executive power? By the theory of your constitution you are free: by its practice you have no freedom to oppose the crown in any thing of this nature, and your constitution is now shaken to its very foundation!

Nothing in which my name is included is to pass unnoticed in this debate, and therefore the right hon. secretary of state referred to a letter of a very curious kind, written by a noble lord, for whom I have great personal respect; but I beg leave to say, that I had no concern in, or knowledge of, what passed on the occasion to which it refers any more than the right hon. secretary; nor had I any knowledge of, or concern in, the publication of that letter. I know that an application was made to the noble lord by some members of this House, requesting him to call for a change of administration. I know not who they were, I never was let into that secret. I never wished to know who the parties were; but the publication of that curious letter has made known a fact of a very important nature to this country; namely, that there are in this House a great number of members who constantly go on with the minister, and give him their support, although they disapprove of his measures, and think him and his colleagues

utterly unfit for their situations; and who think therefore that there ought to be a change. But it is said, that if the chancellor of the exchequer were to go out of power, I should expect to come into his situation, and that therefore what I may say upon the subject is not worth attending to. It is rather hard that I am to be thus silenced. Suppose I was completely disinterested—I know that to a man of the particular taste of the secretary of state, it is difficult to conceive a disinterested sentiment. But, let him for a moment suppose me to be disinterested. How could I have acted otherwise than I did? Perhaps he thinks that, to be candid, I should have said, “My lord, take care; I am going to support you only for a while: you will not continue above a session or two; for then I will come into your place: you run into a danger.” In reality, I gave the noble lord no advice upon the matter. If I had, it should have been a disinterested piece of advice; if I had told him all I thought, I should have said, “Take care, my lord, take care, that, while you are forming the ministry, you are not doing so without solid grounds: unless you have a proper pledge of a reform, the good which you intend will come to nothing. Take care that you are not venturing into a country where a man of your frankness is not a match for the insidious arts which will be practised against you. Take care you do not go into difficulties which will destroy you; that you are not invited only for the purpose of putting an end to the present war, in order that the system which you stifle for a while may be re-established.” And, if I had been called upon to name this successor of the noble lord, I should have no difficulty in pointing out the present chancellor of the exchequer as the man. I had no concern whatever in the matter. I should wish certainly for a change of administration that might lead to peace. My sincere wish was, never to make any part of any administration (and I never will), unless I have a pledge for a general reform of abuses which must be preceded by a complete dereliction of those assumptions of power that have been made since the right hon. gentleman came into office; in short, until we have a pledge, that the constitution shall be restored, at least to the condition it was in when the chancellor of the exchequer came into power; and that there shall be an entire reform of abuses. Until that shall be the desire of the people at

large, and the opinion of this House, I will never form a part of any administration. But I think it is too much to say to me, “Why should you state your terms before your sovereign has called for your services?” I never stated my terms; I never offered my services; and I have no desire to receive an offer. But I have long said, what I now say, that I will never accept of any employment but on the conditions that I have stated. But here again let me be properly understood; for although I wish for a reform of parliament, I have no idea of obtaining it, but by the organ and through the means of parliament. The attempt to obtain it in any other way, I never thought of. That I detest the present administration, that is to say, the present system, is most true; but if I detest them on account of one thing more than another, it is, that their measures have made me think it possible that changes may be made by illegal means, that is, without the intervention of parliament. At one time I know that this was impossible. What a dreadful reflection to a feeling constitutional mind, to think of the change of sentiment that has been effected!

Some gentlemen say, that with me, every debate degenerates into party spirit; that I am ambitious, and that all my speeches tend to throwing things into confusion. Do they mean to say that I wish for violence and tumult? Do they think that I am desirous of imitating Buonaparté, of carrying every thing before me by military valour; or like Barras, to have troops sitting in or surrounding this House, and suppressing the men or party whom I dread by military violence? Do they think that any of us have such wishes? Do they think that the inconveniences of my life (happily less now than formerly) are such as to make me wish for confusion? That I am at a time of life to seek a better fortune by the use of arms? I do not think that those who know me will make any of these accusations against me. Aye! aye! but then comes the order of the day, “disappointment and envy;” what may not these passions goad me to? A learned civilian, of whom I shall say the less, because I had formerly the means of knowing him intimately, chooses to come forward and caricature me as an envious and disappointed man. The candour and generosity of this attempt, coming from him I shall leave to the world. The talents of those artists for caricature I will

not question; but looking to themselves, and looking to me, they will, perhaps, find it difficult to exhibit my figure as the emblem of envy. Not that I defy their genius for misrepresentation; but I really think they might find among themselves figures better adapted to the character. He discovers in me a resemblance to Hanno, the Carthaginian. The allusion naturally brings us back to the history of the period, and makes us think of Hannibal as well as Hanno. If I am Hanno, he must have had in his eye also the Hannibal of the present times. The learned doctor did not say who the Hannibal was, although it was not difficult to find where he meant the allusion to strike. And, certainly, there were some points of resemblance between the right hon. gentleman and the character of Hannibal, which a Plutarch would describe with energetic truth. We are told in history, if I remember rightly, that Hannibal was the son of Hamilcar, one of the greatest generals and statesman in the world, and that Hannibal was sworn, at nine years of age, by his father, to be the eternal enemy of Rome. Whether the chancellor of the exchequer was sworn at that age to be the eternal enemy of the French, I know not. There are some other circumstances which we read in history concerning these two characters, not unworthy of recollection at this moment. Not only was Hanno an enemy to Hannibal, but also to the whole Barsine faction, who were supposed to have shared a great deal from the successes of Hannibal in war. It was said of him, that in all his zeal for the public good he took particular care of his own family, and that Asdrubal and all his other relatives in Spain and elsewhere, were enriched with the public spoil. The right hon. gentleman may perhaps have some relations who certainly have not had their fortunes ruined by the war. I rather think there are some other points of resemblance between Hannibal and the right hon. gentleman, Hannibal having conducted the war against the Romans with great rage, and every degree of bitterness and cruelty; and after having sworn, as I have said, eternal enmity, thought himself a fit person to negotiate a peace; and, indeed, from the speech which Livy makes him deliver, Hannibal was as eloquent a man as any that ever made a speech. The figure that he made in the senate of Carthage upon that occasion was extraordinary. After all the

declarations he had made, he felt the singularity of his situation, and he shortly exposed it — “Ego, Hannibal, peto pacem.” The chancellor of the exchequer has also conducted a war with as much bitterness and rage as that of Hannibal against the Romans. He also has said it would be disgraceful and ruinous to propose peace, but he has also thought himself a fit person to propose and negotiate a peace; and, like Hannibal, he is a very eloquent man. But when we come to the other features of the character of Hannibal, I am afraid the resemblance between him and the chancellor of the exchequer will fail. Hannibal was the most skilful and the most successful conductor of a war the world ever saw. Is that the character of the chancellor of the exchequer? Hannibal had a constantly diffident senate, that counteracted his measures, thwarted his schemes, denied him what he asked, and constantly allowed him but scanty supplies; and yet, with all these difficulties and impediments, he performed greater deeds in war than any other general, except Alexander. Is that the case with the chancellor of the exchequer? With a diffident senate, with scanty supplies, Hannibal contrived to keep up in Italy, for fifteen years together, a powerful confederacy against the Romans, although they were made up of states jealous of each other, the interest of some of whom it was to attack Carthage; yet he kept them together in a confederacy against Rome for fifteen years. Is that the case of the chancellor of the exchequer? If, therefore, I am an envious man, let me be envious of the emoluments of the chancellor of the exchequer; do not say I am envious of his glory, because that would be a bad compliment to the character of my understanding.

It has been said by the secretary of state, that we, unintentionally, pronounced a panegyric on the chancellor of the exchequer for his financial skill, by stating the year 1792 as a period of our prosperity; because it must be well remembered that our condition in 1784 was very low in point of finance. I admit the great prosperity of this country in 1792, as compared with that in 1784. I go farther. I applaud now, as I have often applauded, the chancellor of the exchequer's system with regard to the sinking fund. But, I cannot think it a very wonderful thing that this country should flourish in its

finance in the course of eight years peace. I should certainly think otherwise, if I agreed with the secretary of state, who says, that the present lowness of our funds is owing to the increase of our commerce. But why was I an approver of the conduct of the chancellor of the exchequer in 1792 in preference to that of 1784? Why! let him ask his right hon. friend (Mr. Windham) who sits near him. The system that was adopted in 1784 was entirely repugnant to the principles of our constitution. Whether the calamities that have since befallen this country are the effect of the system adopted in 1784, some persons may think an important inquiry. I think otherwise; for by that system the power of the crown was prodigiously increased, and much of that power, which till then had been in the hands of the people, was made to depend upon the caprice of that tribe of persons who are constantly about a court, have none but court views, and may very properly be denominated a court faction. I now complain, not of the guilt of this, but of the calamity. Has that system, or has it not, produced that calamity? "But here we come to a distinction: in considering this war, we must consider separately what we ourselves have done, and what our allies have done. Our allies have deserted us; we had no reason to suppose they would." Are we to consider the character of a statesman as not including in it some faculty of guessing at the views and interests, and consequently the probable conduct, of those with whom he is to enter into alliance? The chancellor of the exchequer may say, "I engaged with the king of Prussia; I thought he would have been faithful, but he was faithless." Was he not warned of this? When he interfered in the affairs of Holland, he was desired to look at the state of Flanders; he despised our counsel: the result is before our eyes. "But this was a mere mistake." Yes: it was certainly a mistake; but it was a mistake of which he was forewarned. How stands the case now with regard to Austria? Last night for the first time in this House (and I was almost confounded when I heard it; I had almost thought I had got into some other House), Austria was called our "perfidious ally" by one of the friends of the chancellor of the exchequer. This naturally brings to my recollection the manner in which the minister has often spoken of the

house of Austria. To take the debate on the Austrian loan, for instance, as a sample of the rest: I considered the Austrian loan like a subsidy to Austria. I took the liberty of saying that we should never have our money back. The chancellor of the exchequer fell into a rage at this: "What," said he, "treat a loan like a subsidy?—a loan to a prince who is as punctual in pecuniary payments as renowned for military glory!—our faithful ally!—it was base to desert him!" How stands the fact? No re-payment was ever made upon this loan to his imperial majesty; and in a few weeks the people of this country must pay out of their own pockets the interest of this money, which was advanced to the Emperor, because the chancellor of the exchequer was pleased to have a good opinion of the credit of the Bank of Vienna. "But human nature is liable to mistake." So it is: but are those who mistake almost every thing, fit persons to possess public confidence? "But do not look at the campaign with Austria; behold the brilliancy of our naval victories! Has our navy not acted as it should do?" Certainly it has; and but for its exertions, we should not now be debating in this House. But, as an hon. friend of mine has observed already, what are we to think of that cause which even such exertions cannot serve? Montesquieu, who had a happy method of expressing his opinion, said, that "he conceived God Almighty created the Turks and the Spaniards for no other purpose than to show to mankind what a great empire is, when inhabited by slaves." What would Montesquieu say, if he lived among us? He would say, "that country must be in a deplorable state, when it is governed by a minister who cannot advance his cause one step by the brilliant actions of a Howe, a Duncan, a St. Vincent. The man who cannot accomplish his object by such exploits must have something in view that is not attainable by any human power."

The secretary of state has said something of an hussaring expedition in America; by way of derision, I presume. Have we had much profitable hussaring in this war? I know the English have often acted with glory; and I hope they will continue to do so: but, in compliment to the army that I respect, I had rather be silent than say any thing of the English campaigns in Flanders. But it

was stated that we participated in the glory of our allies when they were successful on the continent; that to our supplies of counsel and of gold, were chiefly to be ascribed the triumphs they had achieved. On this participation in the success of our allies the right hon. gentleman boasted in a memorable quotation:

——— Me credite Lesbion,
Me Tenedon, Chrysenque, et Cyllan Apollinis urbes,
Et Scyron cepisse. Meâ concussa putate
Procubuisse solo Lyrnessia mœnia dextrâ.*

“The people of England had a merit in this,” he said, “from the loan they gave; there was not a peasant in this country who did not participate in the joy for the victories of the Austrian arms, because there was not a peasant in this country whose labours did not contribute to produce the loan by which the Austrian arms were supplied.” Something of this kind was said of the Prussian arms at one time—that scene is now shifted—now, even Austria is called a perfidious ally. What conclusion do I draw from this? Why, that a man who is compelled to change and to shift from point to point, as the minister has done in the course of this war, either has no definite object in view, or that, if he has, he never will arrive at it. How are the measures of the minister defended? Can you say any thing for the minister? “No; but others would be worse.” Why, truly, that appears a little extravagant, I think. “But would you not defend this measure rather than invite Buonaparté to come here? Which do you think the worse of the two, this bill, or the requisition of Buonaparté?” Why, truly, I must confess this is an ingenious way of arguing; a curious question to ask of an Englishman. Of the two, certainly a requisition from our own governors is better than that of a foreign enemy. But what sort of defence do you call that? What is this bill? A requisition; founded upon what—justice or injustice? Upon injustice. What is a requisition founded upon injustice? A robbery. There is no criterion by which this plunder upon the people is to be made. Some have called it a tax upon expenditure, and some a tax upon income; it is neither the one nor the other. Indeed I have never heard any one of its advocates explain satisfactorily what it is. Quite sure I am, that it is very difficult,

if not impossible, to lay a tax upon income, without great injustice; and in this case, that injustice is of the most horrible kind. The case put by an hon. friend of mine, is a very fit one, to show the inequality of the measure. Suppose one person has 1,000*l.* in the short annuities, another 1,000*l.* in the long annuities; the income will be the same to both, but the property is very unequal, consequently, the ability to pay is much greater in the one than in the other, so much as six to one, or thereabouts; and yet if this is to be regulated by income, the charge will be exactly the same on both. Income is a thing which cannot in its nature be ascertained; and consequently this measure must be defective in that particular, as well as in every other view in which it can be considered. Gentlemen have said, that we ought to give up a part of our property to preserve the remainder. The justness of that proposition I never attempted to deny, when taken in its fair sense; that is to say by giving a part, the remainder is secured; but when a part is given to a measure that has in its very essence a tendency to render the remainder insecure, there is an end of the justness of the proposition. Such is the nature of the measure now before the House. By assenting to this bill you will lay down a principle that the minister may seize what part and what proportion he pleases of the property of the people of this country, upon the same pretext as he is pleased to make use of now, namely, that it is done for the public good.

I never, until last night, heard any thing like a specific proposition for taxing property in the funds. I have no doubt of the purity of the motives of the learned gentleman (Mr. Simeon) who made that proposition; but I cannot help expressing a hope that no direct tax of that kind will ever take place in this country. There is one way in which the funds may be made to feel the effects of taxation, and that is a fair way, for it is indirect in its effect. Such, indeed, is always the case, when any addition is made to our funded debt; that addition must, in the nature of things have some effect upon the value of that which was funded before. This effect, however, touches nothing but the marketable price of the capital; it has nothing to do with the dividends. That sort of effect it is just it should have; because government faith is only pledged for the punctual payment of the interest of your

* See Vol. 32, p. 1318.

funded debt; the capital, each individual must make what he can of in the market. This bill is an unjust measure from the beginning to the end, but that which is the most glaring injustice is the clause which gives to the bill a retrospective effect. That makes it an *ex post facto* law. From the circumstance of a man having kept a carriage last year, you presume he will have a certain income the next, and therefore you tax him at a certain rate. Nothing can be more inconclusive, or more unjust than this. Some gentlemen, indeed, admit that this bill is unjust, which they affect to lament; but they say that money must be had, and a great deal must be raised within the year, and therefore they will vote for it for want of a better measure for the public service. When a measure is proposed which is to take from the people that which must in many cases be taken unjustly, if taken at all, what should it be called but a robbery? This bill is unjust in many cases. Are your public affairs in that state in which it is indispensably necessary that your legislature should enact injustice? Why, Sir, this bill is so monstrous, and the objections to it are so many, that the difficulty is, where to begin with them, or how to compress them into something like a tolerable compass. I met a gentleman to-day, whose case is only one out of a thousand others that are at hand, perhaps some of them harder. That gentleman has, for some time, kept a four wheeled little carriage, drawn by a single horse. He asked me at what time it was necessary for him to prove he discontinued the use of it, in order to be exempted from the duties of this bill upon that single article? I told him I understood the day to be the 10th of October last. He said he had laid it down before that time, and wished to have sold it, but could not meet with a purchaser. The gentleman then told me, that one day, after the 10th of October, having occasion to go as far as Fulham, and it being a rainy day, he took his little carriage, there being a head, or cover to it, and went in it, in preference to riding on horseback, and to save the expense of a hackney coach. Thus for this one journey to Fulham in a rainy day, he must pay 32*l.* a year for an indefinite period. I say an indefinite period, for there is no time for the operation of this bill. Now I ask, is this any thing like justice? I wish to know, whether there was any

thing adopted in France, that in point of principle is worse than this? The extent of the injustice is another thing; the principle is the same whether the injury be large or small.

The next point that presents itself to my mind, thus cursorily running over the bill, is the case of a person who is entitled to a small fortune upon the death of his parent. Let us suppose the case of a son whose father had lived in a profuse way the year before his death, and whose expenditure was much beyond the proportion of his income. The son must pay for it; for the scale of assessment is not to be formed by what the estate of the son can afford, but by what the extravagance of the father has squandered. Thus a man is made to pay, not according to his ability, but according to his misfortune; not that misfortune which is brought on by his own fault, but that misfortune which is brought upon him by the fault of another. Does this apply to the rich heir? No. He is protected by the provisions of the bill. But in answer to this it is said that the relief afforded under the declaration of property, is an answer to all these objections. Are you aware of all the difficulties that will attend the declaration of income? I own that, speaking in the abstract, I do not see why gentlemen of fortune should have any difficulty in declaring what their incomes are; but I know they have that difficulty; they do possess that nicety. I know that many gentlemen in the country, who in the early part of their lives, in consequence of some dissipation, had improvidently granted annuities, which they would profit highly by paying off, even although they mortgaged their estates for that purpose, but who nevertheless continue to pay such annuities rather than mortgage their estates, because that has a tendency to disclose their real income. I am not defending that practice; I am not saying it is a wise one. I rather think it is a weakness, or perhaps a silliness; but I am stating it as a fact, to show the disinclination men have to disclose their circumstances. And is it not cruel to attack their delicacy, or if gentlemen like it better, their prejudices, in the way proposed by this bill, and then to call such a measure relief? Again—let us suppose two gentlemen, next door neighbours, each of the income of 1,000*l.* a year, the one of them living in his own house, the other giving 200*l.* a year rent for the one

he occupies; suppose the two houses to be equally assessed, these two persons will pay exactly the same sum by this bill, although, in point of fact, the income of the one is a complete 1,000*l.* a year, and the other only 800*l.*, for this bill does not allow the rent to be deducted out of the income. Do you call that justice? I will put another case; it is my own, and in my favour by this bill, but unjustly in my favour. I rented a house in London for a while; I afterwards bought it. I borrowed the money to pay for it; for which money I now pay the yearly interest of 100*l.*, that 100*l.* a year which I pay as interest for borrowed money, may be deducted out of my income under the provision of this bill, whereas had I continued to pay the same sum in rent, and not purchased the house, I should not have been entitled to make the deduction. Do you see any justice in that case? The truth of the matter is, that this bill is filled with most monstrous inequalities and the most gross injustice in every branch of it; and it reminds me of what is stated by Adam Smith, in his celebrated book on the Wealth of Nations. That author complains of the inequality with which small taxes fall on different classes of the community. What would he say if he were living, and could look at the inequalities of this bill? The truth of the matter is, that the authors of this measure have already shown a contempt for the liberty of the subject, and they very consistently follow up their plan with a contempt for their property. But it seems "the state requires great supplies." I grant it. But let me ask, if the necessity is such as to require great injustice? By this bill there will be cases in which one man will pay triple the sum which another pays, and yet both their incomes will be the same. In defending this bill you are forced to go to France for argument. You say, "I want money; money I must have, I care not how." This bill will fall with great weight upon the poor; and will fall unequally even upon them. It will fall with tremendous weight upon the middle class, but it will fall unequally upon the middle class, some of which it must inevitably crush. It will fall with considerable weight upon the rich; so that there is not one class in society upon which this bill will fall with justice. It has but one species of equality, and upon that perhaps you may defend it, the equality of its injustice.

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Some gentlemen have affected a great deal of contempt for the opinion of shopkeepers, as to the effect which this bill will have upon gentlemen. "What can a shopkeeper know of a gentleman?" Why, yes, he can, and must know a good deal of many gentlemen, before he can be a successful shopkeeper. I ask every member, whether at a particular season of the year he does not allot a certain part of his income for the payment of his tradesmen? When this bill comes to be carried into effect, must not many gentlemen say to a tradesman, "I have been compelled to give away my money to pay the new assessment, you must wait until I have another opportunity of paying you." Perhaps some gentlemen may say as a learned gentleman has decently said, imitating the language of Henry 8th, upon a well known occasion: "You are brutes, and do not know these things." Tradesmen are no such brutes as not to know that if gentlemen have no money they cannot pay their bills. They know it already. Many gentlemen have given them pretty clear information upon that subject. But we may be told that if a gentleman does not pay his tradesman, the law is open—that the law is equal to all: true, the law is equal to all; but that law cannot be enforced without expense; and is it equally convenient to all to defray the expense, which is a preliminary to the enforcement of that law? But it seems "we who oppose this bill have shifted our ground: at one time we complained that this bill would affect, in a direct manner, all persons in trade, but since the modifications of the bill, that argument is done away." To which I answer look at the resolutions of the different meetings that have been held all over this metropolis. They all state that no modification can render this bill free from objection; by which they clearly show that they object to the principle of the bill.

Some gentlemen have had the firmness to say, "that this bill is now a popular bill." But the noble lord (lord Hawkesbury) last night very fairly excepted the metropolis, by which he meant certainly the whole town and the out-parishes. The inhabitants of the metropolis will pay nearly one-fourth of the whole. Is it not a dreadful thing that they who have to a man protested against it, should be commanded to comply with such a measure? What is the language of a money bill? "We give voluntarily,"

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Who gives voluntarily? all the people of the metropolis? No! do they not state it will ruin them? Will this bill keep their affection towards government? Is it to be supposed that they will want to be addressed in the words which were delivered last night by an hon. baronet (sir F. Burdett), to make them compare this to measures which the French have adopted? They are driven to make these comparisons by this House; and that is, I believe, what the hon. baronet meant. Every one will not judge freely, but I hope most will. Is it not a lamentable thing that this House should pass a bill against which the whole metropolis protests, and from which nearly one-fourth of the whole impost is to be collected?—Then comes again the common-place answer: “You encourage the enemy by your observations.” This is the old and stale argument constantly made use of against me during the American war. “You are a friend to a French invasion.” Sir, I have some experience in these false accusations of “encouraging the enemy, and so on. It is the fashion now to say to any man who does not join in reverence to the minister, “you are the friend of the French.” “There are a number of disaffected people in this country who wish to see things thrown into confusion.” Whether the French Directory believe this or not, I neither know nor care. I know where they have learnt it. They have learnt it from the late books of Mr. Burke, and the speeches of the chancellor of the exchequer, and those officious, charitable friends of his, who confound in one common mass of guilty friendship for the French, all those who oppose the minister. This idea Mr. Burke inculcated strongly in his late pamphlet. He states, that all the reformers in this country are men of French principles. The chancellor of the exchequer and his assistants, aid and abet the publication of that slander; and if the Directory are foolish enough to believe it, all I can say is, I know to whom they owe the favour.

Does the chancellor of the exchequer think that this tax can be levied? When does he think the operation of it is to cease? There is no stated period for its continuance; it is to be in force until it shall have produced seven millions in the first instance, and eight millions in the second, the whole sum to be raised being fifteen millions. Why, then, the bill, although called a temporary measure, is

not to be for one, two, or three years, but is to continue until it shall have produced fifteen millions. Upon my honour, Sir, it is quite impossible to preserve one's patience; here again I am called upon to pay too much in proportion as my neighbour shall happen to pay too little. If I pay my share for two years, and my neighbour does not pay for one, I must pay again, so that I pay for three years instead of two. “But this is the exigency of the time.” Why, yes, Sir, it is that sort of exigency or vengeance which puts to flight all notions of justice, of equity, of honour, or of honesty. And for what? For the support of this war? What is the nature of this war? What is the object of it? I can conceive that Hannibal might have said to the Carthaginians—“Grant me but such and such supplies, and I will put an end to this war. I will take the city of Rome, and I will bring you peace.” But is any thing of that kind the case here? We are told that this is a war not only defensive in principle, but also in operations. Will you expect, therefore, that lord Hawkesbury should go to Paris as Hannibal did to Rome? But to be serious: Do you expect that your armies, or even your fleet can bring your affairs to a crisis which may terminate the contest? The right hon. secretary of state says, that if the French should invade us, the struggle would be a very short one. I hope, if that event should happen, the struggle would be a short one; but I hope also the enemy will not come. The threat that they will come, however, brings to my mind what was said by the chancellor of the exchequer four years ago. I remember how, in a beautiful display of eloquence, he said “the French were not merely on the brink, but in the gulf of bankruptcy.” They now say we are in that situation. I hope they are as much mistaken with regard to our resources, as the chancellor of the exchequer has proved himself to be with regard to theirs.

I say, I hope for peace, and I say there is no rational hope for peace without a removal of ministers. They say they have done all they can to obtain peace, and they refer to the opinion which this House expressed upon the subject of the last negotiation. Not having attended when that negotiation was discussed, I will grant that in their last negotiation they were sincere. But now they triumph and

say, "Whatever you thought of the war at first, now you should join in the prosecution of it, for now you have no other remedy." Will the people of this country be satisfied with this declaration? Will they not rather say, "We should have ministers who were not only sincerely desirous last summer to obtain peace, but who were always desirous to obtain it; who are now desirous to obtain it. Will they not say, "We know that this contest might have been put an end to three years ago? Nothing stood in the way of that blessing but the perverse disposition of ministers." Indeed, the hon. gentleman who spoke last, whatever cause may have changed his mind, since, was of that opinion some time ago. He thought we should propose some terms of peace: he made a motion to that effect, in which I had the honour to join with him. Did he not think then, that ministers had neglected their duty in not attempting to negotiate? I know not, nor am I solicitous to know, what he thinks now. I am of opinion, and so I believe are the people of this country in general, that ministers neglected an opportunity which they fairly had of obtaining peace. This House thought there was a fair opportunity when the hon. gentleman's motion was made. The chancellor of the exchequer, perceiving this, indulged the House by allowing it to express a wish for peace, but, by an artful trick, he prevailed upon it to adopt certain words in their resolutions, by which it was left to the ministers to judge, "whether France was in a situation capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other powers." Does any man doubt that the French were then as capable of maintaining peace as any power in the world? I am not bound to form a comparative opinion between the power of France to maintain peace at that time and at the present; but if I was bound, I should say that they were more so at that period than they are at this moment, or were last summer, when our ministers attempted to negotiate with them: therefore, upon their own principle, ministers have neglected an opportunity of obtaining peace. Why then am I compelled to lay down my carriage? Why am I compelled to discharge my servants? Why am I compelled to turn away my labourers? Why am I to deprive my wife and family of their comforts? Why are the manufacturers and artisans of this country starving? Why

are the middle class of society to be reduced to poverty? Because the French attacked us in 1792, and sent away lord Malmesbury in 1797? No! but because the king's ministers did not choose to say in 1795; that the French were capable of maintaining peace and amity with other powers, so that all your happiness or comfort, and for aught I know, your existence, is made to depend upon the opinion of the king's ministers, and that too, when such opinion was contrary to that of all the rest of Europe. For this are we to be assessed and mulct and robbed and plundered, more than any nation, not in a state of revolution, ever was upon earth.

We are all agreed that great exertions are necessary, but differ about the means. My opinion is most clear, that great exertions must now be made: my opinion is as clear that such exertions cannot be made while those ministers who have so abused their power continue to possess it; and on account of whose negligence arises the very question which is now before you. But it seems, we should now be unanimous; and gentlemen on the other side say, that my speeches are not calculated to produce unanimity. The best return to that is, "are yours?" You wish us to come to you. We say you should come over to us? "What the majority come over to the minority?" Yes, the majority come over to the minority. There are many gentlemen in this House who have sat upon juries. I ask them, whether, when a jury is divided in opinion, and the case cannot be settled without a compromise, those who are of the severe opinion do not constantly give way to those of the milder disposition? When the question therefore is, whether you shall agree to a measure that is directly hostile to the constitution, that calls upon the people to pay what they have distinctly told you they cannot pay, I say, that the majority should come over to the minority. You cannot expect the confidence of the people upon your present system; it has already led to too many misfortunes. I say the mass of the people of England are against you; but were it possible to obtain it, would you be contented with the unanimity of the people of Great Britain? I say you should have the unanimity and affection of the whole of the British empire. Look at Ireland. After the fatal consequences that have ensued upon your breaking the promises

which you authorized lord Fitzwilliam to make, do you conceive that you will have unanimity there without parliamentary reform and the emancipation of the Catholics? After the inhuman dragooning and horrible executions, the recital of which makes the blood run cold; after so much military cruelty, not in one, but almost every part of the country; is it possible for this administration to procure unanimity in Ireland? I will do them the justice to say, they do not themselves expect it: they trust there to the force of a military government. In this war it is said, and truly, that we have more acknowledged superiority than ever we had, even at sea: and yet such is the general disaffection in Ireland, and such is the cause for general disaffection in England, that the force for the internal defence of both, is four times as great as when you had all France, Spain and Holland, against you and when they were powers independent of each other, not as they now are, under the nod of the, French Republic. Now you are forced to have large armies, not only against foreign nations, but also against your domestic enemies, as you call them, both in England and in Ireland, but most particularly in Ireland. In this country we are told there are many disaffected persons, and so on; and it was brought as a charge against me, that I said I thought there was no plot against the government of this country proved to exist I thought in the year 1794 that the number of persons who were disaffected to the form of our government was not large. I thought, with Mr. Justice Eyre, "that they were almost without numbers, without money, and even without zeal;" but I do not think now, because there is silence, that therefore there is safety. "But you predicted that lord Fitzwilliam's zeal would produce mischief. Nothing, for a long time after that, happened in Ireland, and therefore your prediction was wrong." Were not the seeds of disaffection and revolt sown by that recall? have you not encouraged them to shoot up? Have you not nurtured them in their growth? Do you not now see the produce? Do you not expect soon to be called upon to reap the harvest? My opinion is, that those who were for a republic in preference to a monarchy, or who wished to reduce the monarchy to a cypher, were few at first. I believe they are not yet formidable in numbers; but that they are increased in such a proportion, that if they

were at first so numerous as they were said to be, they would now be a dreadful body, is what I cannot hesitate to say. Are you now proceeding in a way to reduce their number? Do you expect to make men love the monarchy of this country by confusion, confiscation, and military cruelty? When men reason, or think they reason, upon any subject, you must treat even their prejudices with tenderness. You are now a divided and discontented people. What is your remedy? A change of system. A ministry that shall give confidence to the French, not that confidence which they wish, but the confidence which we wish, a confidence that we have a ministry capable of commanding the unanimous affections of the people of Great Britain and of Ireland. This can be obtained only, by an entire change of system, by a correction of abuses, by a parliamentary reform, and above all, by allowing the people their just balance in your political scale—that is the way to unite their affections, and to make the whole mass of them as it were one man, fixed and determined on his object, and that object his country's glory. That is the way to display the real beauties of our constitution; the true old British constitution. Show the people that their constitution is not paper and packthread, but that it is capable of procuring for them real, solid blessings; not a constitution that permits confiscation, proscription, plunder and military execution; not a constitution under which those only can go on with the war who are hated and condemned by the people; not a constitution under which the multitude are pressed almost to death, while others smile and bear no part of the burthen. I see here the impropriety of not having an example from the highest authority to encourage us to bear our burthens. A learned gentleman alluded to the case of the people of Rome when they were oppressed. They said to their rulers, "you may beat us with stripes, but you cannot take from us that which we have not."—What did the people of high rank in Rome do? They made the greatest sacrifices to show the people they were willing to bear their share of the burthens; they did not leave themselves any gold or silver, except for the sake of distinction—a gold fringe for the Patrician youth, and earrings and necklaces for the Roman matrons. I ask for no such sacrifices, I only ask that those who have the highest

prerogatives, privileges, and immunities, should not be wholly exempted from these burthens, and stand aloof from the scene of action. I only ask that some sacrifices should be made. To what extent I should leave to the good sense and honourable feelings of others.

But it is said that this bill will give no additional influence to the crown. I do not mean to insinuate that ministers intend it should; on the contrary, I acquit them of any such intention: but that it will have that effect is most clear, and is unavoidable. It will add more to the influence of the crown than any other measure that has been adopted in the course of the present war. I think I know what I am saying upon this subject, having had a great deal of experience upon it in the course of so many repeated canvasses for Westminster. If the case should be, as I am afraid it will, that when the contribution is called for, hardly any man can pay it, what are you to do? Would you cast every defaulter into prison, or distrain upon his goods? No, there will be some indulgence. That must be, in the nature of the thing, discretionary; and thus every man must be, more or less, under the power of the tax collector; that collector must, from the nature of his office, be connected with government. Those who canvass at elections will find a vast number of men who have very decided opinions against administration, but who are afraid of doing any thing that may disoblige those who have influence with the executive power. I do not say that this is the desire of ministers. I do not think it is: but I do say that this will be the inevitable consequence of it; for a prodigious number of men will be aware that they must either vote for a court candidate against their conscience, or be ruined. What, then, is the result of all this? Why, that the crown will have, by this bill, an immense power, in addition to that enormous influence which it already has in this House, and which has been the source of all your evils, and has made you a mockery of the public voice. I say, put an end to all these unseemly appearances. Recur to your good old English constitution. Make the crown what it ought to be; what the constitution intended it to be—the guardian of the rights and liberties of the subjects; not the object of their jealousy and alarm, such as I have no hesitation in pronouncing it now to be. I ask you to examine with

attention the history of this country, and to reflect upon it. You will see that all its calamities have been chiefly owing to that system which tends to increase the influence of the crown, and to encroach upon the rights of the people; a system that must end either in slavery or revolt. But when we examine the course of this war, and the train of evils which it has already brought upon us: when we see the contemptible ignorance of the greater part, the indifference of others, of those who generally compose what is called the court party, concerning the rights and liberties of the people, and of the means to procure them happiness, when we see what description of persons they are, naturally, from their ignorance and folly, led to protect and encourage; when we see that it is a part of their system to excuse from all burthen those who ought to be the most ready to bear it—we are naturally led, to call for a radical and fundamental change of system, as well as of the ministers who have acted under it, and who have brought you to your present most calamitous condition. I wish this country to manifest its strength to the world at large, and most emphatically to the enemy. I know that cannot be done without large supplies; but all our supplies must be voluntary; in that has consisted the very essence of our country's glory; in that has consisted the difference between us and other nations, which has so often exalted us above them all, in faith, in credit, in honour, in every thing that constitutes the greatness of a people. In that, too, has consisted the difference between the measures adopted in this and other wars, and which reveals the mystery of your present distress. What is the remedy? A radical reform, a total change of system; but above all, a parliament that shall be known, felt, and acknowledged, to speak the voice of the people. I remember how beautifully this point was illustrated by Mr. Burke in his celebrated speech for conciliation with the colonies,* the substance of which was (speaking of the cases of Wales and Chester). That the march of the human mind was slow; that it was not, until after 200 years, discovered that by an eternal law, Providence had decreed vexation to violence, and poverty to rapine; that our ancestors did, however, at length open their eyes to the ill husbandry of injustice.

* See Vol. 18, p. 513.

They found that the tyranny of a free people could, of all tyrannies, the least be endured, and that laws made against a whole nation were not the most effectual methods for securing its obedience. Accordingly, in the 27th of Henry 8th, the course was entirely altered; with a preamble, stating the entire and perfect rights of the crown of England, it gave to the Welsh all the rights and privileges of English subjects. A political order was established: the military power gave way to the civil; the marches were turned into counties. But that a nation should have a right to English liberties, and yet have no share at all in the fundamental security of these liberties, the grant of their own property, seemed a thing so incongruous, that eight years after, that is, in the 35th of that reign, a complete, and not ill-proportioned, representation by counties and boroughs was bestowed upon Wales by act of parliament. From that moment, as by a charm, the tumults subsided, obedience was restored, peace, order, and civilization, followed in the train of liberty. When the day star of the English constitution had risen in their hearts, all was harmony within and without.

Simul alba nautis
Stella refulsit
Defluit saxis agitatus humor:
Concidunt venti, fugiuntque nubes:
Et minax (quod sic voluere) ponto
Unda recumbit.

This is saying, that it is a divine principle which God and nature have planted in the human character: so that there, and there only, can there be true security for social blessings, where there is a true representation of the people. By this he has said more in favour of a representative government (I do not mean a representative government in the sense which some invidious persons are ready to impute to me, but a true representation of the people in this House), than is contained in whole volumes that have been written upon the subject. You know what has passed in Ireland upon the subject of a corrupt parliament. It is good for us to have a magnifying glass through which such an object may be viewed, because it enables us to see its deformity the more distinctly. Mr. Grattan stated plainly, "that peerages were sold in Ireland to those who sent members into the House of Commons to vote for government." Was that denied? Not a word

of it. Something of that kind has been stated by my hon. friend (Mr. Tierney). Has that been denied? No notice has been taken of it. Will you then persist in passing a bill which the whole metropolis, called upon to pay one-fourth of it, unanimously disapprove? Yes; I believe you will, in utter defiance of the public voice. Am I then unreasonable in my declaration, that I will not attend this House, when I am so confident I cannot do good? The best thing I can do is to draw the attention of the people to the House of Commons. Let them see what passes here; who they are who sit and act here; and then let them decide whether they are represented here or not. I do not wish to have any share in directing their anger, much less in inflaming their passions, although it is said that much artifice is employed for that purpose. There was a division here some time ago, and there were two hundred and odd against fifteen. I do not mean to detract from the abilities of that minority, especially those of my hon. friends who spoke to-night, but they will forgive me, if I say, that the public abhorrence of this bill is not the effect of their eloquence. It is owing to the intrinsic iniquity of the bill itself, which is most evident from the fact, that almost all the resolutions of all the parishes were entered into before much had been said in parliament against it. I know we are in a situation to which the wisdom of our ministers is not adequate. I will go farther, and say, that the wisdom of no man, or body of men, is equal to it; nor ever will be so upon your present plan of politics. We must have the advice of the people collected and expressed freely and liberally. Our basis must be made much broader than it is at present. We must give to the people their due share in the government; we must let them know and feel that they are fighting for their own rights and for their own sovereignty, against foreign nations, and for that liberty which no foreign nation can give. You can do nothing by saying in this House, "this or that is the opinion of the people," but you should have that opinion from themselves freely expressed, by a true, substantial, as well as virtual representation of the people. Not by universal suffrage, in my opinion, but upon a scale short of that; but, with that limitation, as large as it is otherwise possible. These are the only means to show the real strength of this country. By these means

you will neither have nor want so many mercenary troops as you have at present, but you will possess a much more important force to assert and protect your freedom.

Mr. *Pitt* said:—I should have thought it, Sir, unnecessary to trouble you at any length, after the admission made by the several gentlemen who have most vehemently opposed this measure, if the principle they conceded in name was not afterwards recalled in substance, and treated as a matter wholly inapplicable to the case before them. The principle I allude to is this, whether, in the present circumstances of this country, there is, or is not an occasion to make a great and unexampled exertion to defeat the projects of the enemy, and secure our national independence and honour. The affirmative of this proposition has been uniformly admitted: unless, therefore, the House, influenced by what has been advanced in the course of this night's debate, should think proper expressly to retract that opinion, I have a right to take it as the fundamental point that will govern their determination. This is not an opinion hastily adopted, and lightly considered. It is the language which, after full deliberation and inquiry, the House, at the commencement of the session, presented at the foot of the throne. And so far from any thing having been advanced contrary to this position, in the course of the present debate, the right hon. gentleman himself has unequivocally admitted, that great military and financial exertion is indispensable in the present situation of the country. Now, having advanced so much, it was natural to expect he would disclose the nature of those exertions, the necessity of which he did not deny; and if he disapproved of the present mode of raising so considerable a part of the supplies within the year that he would point out how that end might be obtained, by means less objectionable. The question, as now argued by the right hon. gentleman, is, whether, after a delay of six weeks since the first agitation of this subject, and two months since the issue of the negotiation, from which period the necessity of the exertions he admits must be dated;—whether, after such a delay, all exertion should not be suspended on the part of the country, till the House should obtain the dismissal of his majesty's present ministers, a radical parliamentary reform, and a total change of system. Such is the ground, if

I understood him right, on which he wishes the present question to be determined. In his opinion, the guilt of the present administration is so enormous, their general and particular misconduct so manifest and great, that all the faculties of government should be suspended till they are removed. Their removal alone, however, will not do, and he has no hopes of security, without a radical reform in parliament, and a total change of system; and, unless these latter parts are conceded, he professes that he will not take any share in any new administration that may be formed. With a view of persuading the House to pursue these objects, much time and much eloquence have been consumed, to convince them that they had a regular constitutional right to withhold the supplies, till the grievances, of which they might think proper to complain, were redressed. But that time and that eloquence appear to me to be wholly misemployed. No one that I know of ever doubted of the validity of that doctrine. The true question now is, according to the right hon. gentleman's mode of reasoning, not whether they have a right under the constitution of withholding the supplies until grievances were redressed, but whether the House and country look upon those things as grievances which the right hon. gentleman does; and whether they will make such an exercise of power in the present situation of the country, to obtain a radical parliamentary reform and a total change of system, according to his acceptance of those expressions? It becomes, therefore, of great consequence to ascertain what that acceptance is: and if any ambiguity or uncertainty exists from loose and indefinite expressions, the true meaning will be found to arise no less from the colour and complexion of circumstances which accompany, precede, and follow his professions, than from logical distinctions and the context of words. Now I wish to put it seriously to the House, whether, notwithstanding the explanations for the first time given this night by the right hon. gentleman of the extent of his meaning in this respect, a very considerable portion of uncertainty, as to their extent, does not yet remain, and whether all the exertion he himself admits to be necessary for the salvation of the country, is to be suspended till objects so general, loose, and indefinite, are obtained? For such is the partial result of all he has now advanced.

But to descend to the few particulars

he has mentioned. A change of ministers, he says, is absolutely necessary before any peace, consistent with the welfare and security of the country, can be expected. Yet how was this attempted to be proved. I do not consider myself much indebted to the right hon. gentleman's candour in admitting, that at least ministers were sincere in the last negotiation for peace. No man, in or out of the House, could venture to entertain a doubt of a fact so plain and manifest. The internal evidences of the treaty itself, and every circumstance by which it was attended, sets every suspicion on that subject at defiance. The sincerity and zeal of ministers throughout the whole of their conduct on that occasion, is established beyond the possibility of doubt. It is not now for me to enter into the discussion how far, in 1794 and 1795, France was capable of preserving the relations of peace and amity. Every thing that the right hon. gentleman could urge on this subject, was advanced when the facts of that question were recent and regularly before the House, which, after full inquiry and deliberation, gave an opinion contrary to that which he maintained. Every step that ministers have taken relative to peace, has been submitted to parliamentary discussion, and is fully before the public: and I can assert with confidence, that no man can deny that they have done every thing to obtain peace, short of sacrificing the honour and welfare of the country. According to the right hon. gentleman's own view of the subject, it is a singular mode of reasoning, to threaten ministers with dismissal, that peace might be obtained, because they had not done every thing in their power to obtain it before, though there is no doubt they have since been, and were still disposed so to do. The reasoning is still more curious if followed farther. Suppose the measure recommended by the right hon. gentleman were adopted, is it likely that any new administration could succeed in negotiating with the enemy, after a considerable suspension of exertion and comparative weakness, when the present administration, backed with the whole strength of the country, had failed? Who will undertake that, in case of an appointment of a new administration, by means at least injurious to our strength, the enemy will be inclined to give terms of peace which they denied to the present ministers, when their conduct was admitted by all to be

such, as this new administration could alone adopt? But, if the right hon. gentleman's argument has any weight, it is at best ill timed at present, and should have been argued two months ago, on the first termination of the treaty.—The right hon. gentleman has attempted to draw a distinction between the responsibility of those in office, and those who are not so. In this, however, I do not see any marks of that impartiality which should equally guide both the one and the other. He seems to think, that, while he has a perfect right to arraign the conduct of public men in office, he being a private member of parliament, is not answerable for his conduct. I certainly know of no sanction that any man in office has, that should exempt him from animadversion on his conduct; and as little am I acquainted with any exemption that private gentlemen may have from reprehension, when their conduct is such as to deserve it: justice, prudence, and expediency, as little exempt the one as the other. I therefore cannot but behold the right hon. gentleman as amenable for his conduct as any other person, whether I consider his character, in relation to domestic concerns at home, or the situation of the enemy abroad. With specious professions of humility, he has doubtless declared himself a simple individual, and expressed a determination to abstain from the risk and fatigue of public office. But what does this amount to? It is not certain that, thinking as many around him do, the country can be saved by him alone. Thinking so, I say, if a change of administration should take place, will they not feel themselves bound to overcome his scruples, and insist, as a matter of public duty, that he should take upon him the burthen of office? Nay, I put it to them, whether they would not consider it as the pride and glory of their lives, by any means in their power, to place him in the situation to which they think his talents entitle him? And if they think so, they will, in so doing, do no more than what, according to their view of the subject, is right and highly laudable in them to effect. Nevertheless those who might differ from them in that opinion, and, though admitting the brilliancy and extent of the right hon. gentleman's talents, think that the practical application of them would not conduce to the welfare of the country—such persons must be allowed to look to that event with repugnance and alarm.

Upon this subject I have no hesitation in declaring, that while I wish for such a peace as is consistent with the security and welfare of this kingdom, I should feel it a bounden duty, if the right hon. gentleman had any chance of succeeding me, to remain in office at any risk, in order to prevent an effect so fatal to the safety of the country, as the gratification of the wishes of him and his friends. I have yet to learn what is the nature of that confidence, which the enemy are to have in an administration supported by that right hon. gentleman. I have on a former occasion said, that I do not envy those whose boast it is that they stand high in the confidence of the enemy. It is maintained, that in case of a change of administration, the House and the country would have the most unlimited confidence as to the sincerity of the negotiation for peace; and if it could not be obtained on just and reasonable terms, that in such a case the war would be continued with incalculable advantage. Will those who think in this way, attempt to deny that the right hon. gentleman and all his friends have uniformly, since the commencement of the war, maintained the cause of the enemy, at least so far as to contend that they acted on the defensive, and that we were the aggressors? Throughout the whole course of the war they have asserted the justice of the enemy's cause, and the insufficiency of our resources. How, in case of such men succeeding to office, terms favourable or just to this country are to be expected, or how, if the war is to be continued, the enemy are to be convinced of the energy of our kingdom and the permanency of our means, I leave to the judgment of the House.

The next point of attack against his majesty's ministers is, their misconduct in respect to general constitutional doctrines; and then, that they are bad financial ministers, and incompetent to preserve the combination, which, as to the prosecution of the war, they had so much relied upon. These points, which are wholly irrelevant to the present question, have repeatedly been discussed and decided in this House, and may be decided again after this is determined, as they have been before. These I do not in the least consider myself bound to enter into at present; and if I did, the decision, either one way or the other, would not affect this bill. Upon these subjects, however, the strength of the right hon.

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gentleman's arguments lay in this: he says, you, the administration of the country, are incompetent and ignorant; you rely on foreign alliances; these alliances desert you. You grant subsidies, you guarantee loans. We told you this would not secure you allies. You are fools, and we are wise. I put it, however, to the recollection of the House, whether those loans, subsidies, and alliances, were ever maintained on any such principle as that it was impossible to be deceived. I do not regret those loans, subsidies, and alliances, of which the right hon. gentleman complains. They were entered into with correct views of the real and permanent interest of the country: and though I could have wished that other powers had had a true sense of their own interest: yet, as a matter of policy, I do not regret the advantage we derived even at the expense at which it was purchased.

When it is considered that the conduct of ministers with respect to peace was such as those who wish for a change themselves, approve, it is pretty certain that the real cause for their retirement is not that which is ostensibly assigned. But whether the motive be real or pretended, it can be no reason for postponing the present bill, as whether the present administration continue in power or yield their places to others, this bill would be equally expedient and necessary. Suppose the right hon. gentleman was at the head of a new administration, the same exertion would be necessary; the same question would revert, whether it was expedient to raise seven of the nineteen millions within the year. Is it therefore, fair, or generous, or manly, to hear the possibility of a change assigned as a cause for delaying a measure, which, under every administration, would be equally necessary? There must be some secret motive for this sudden exertion of the right hon. gentleman. It was most probably to take advantage of what he supposed the public opinion, that he thus appeared again in embattled phalanx, and left the hidden path of secret warfare. With what other view would he otherwise bring into such a debate all the inflammatory topics he has urged, and in a speech of three or four hours, though attending as he says, by the express commands of his constituents, scarce touch on the subject which he came forward to discuss? Instead of watching the details and particular bearings of this bill, he adverted only to its principle in

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the most general terms, and did not even attend in that stage in which alone, by means of regulations, he could alleviate those hardships of which his constituents complain. Far from observing the instructions he professed to obey, he enters into the most foreign question concerning the origin and conduct of the war, in which, as usual, he decides in favour of France, and against this country, and in favour of himself and his party against the ministers in whom his majesty thinks proper to confide. He wishes to impose on the House the condition of putting off the discussion of the bill he was sent here to discuss, in order to enforce that radical reform of parliament and total change of system, of which his constituents in their instructions said nothing, and which if he thought it his duty to urge, he should have felt himself bound to attend for that purpose, without waiting for those injunctions which were the occasion of his presence.—I, for one, should be glad to have a clear idea of what the right hon. gentleman means by this species of reform and change. He has on former occasions expressed the same wishes, but yet in a way more general. In the course of what he has said on this subject to-night, we have at least the satisfaction of learning that he looks only to these changes through the organ of parliament, which, however, he expects will not be effected by the power of his eloquence or the force of his reasoning within, but by the influence of the public mind from without. The precise plan of parliamentary reform, of which he is the advocate, is now for the first time disclosed; namely, that brought forward last session by another hon. friend of his (Mr. Grey), not now in his place. Thus for a plan of parliamentary reform, which the House had already discussed and rejected, and for other particular reformations, on which neither his constituents nor the public had expressed any opinion at all, he wishes the House to suspend and hang up all the means of public defence, in a crisis of unexampled danger and difficulty. This mode of obtaining his object is certainly less mild and regular than the one he professed himself attached to, with respect to parliamentary reform; for it tends to this—suspend your exertions, let the enemy come and make this change of system and reform the price of self-defence; an expedient at least hazardous and rash under the present circumstances of the country.

If, to avoid this inference, the right hon. gentleman should contend, that by the influence of the public mind, he means the operation of the fair rational sense of the public mind on their representatives only, then he must admit that he has at last found something more sympathetic between the people and their representatives than he thinks it possible to discover in some views of the subject he occasionally takes, a consistent ground of virtual and effective representation, even in the present form of parliament. If he means neither of these, but something else different from both, but which he does not think it fit and prudent at this moment explicitly to state, his views are then evidently open to the objection, on the ground of ambiguity and indistinctness, which an hon. friend of mine (Mr. Wilberforce) has said occasioned diffidence and alarm.—The right hon. gentleman has thought proper, on this, and on several other occasions, to quote some words used by me in reference to this subject. It is impossible to recollect particular words used so long ago; but I frankly admit, that my views of parliamentary reform were favourable to that object, and that I, on all occasions, expressed my opinion with all the warmth of expression I could use: these, however, must, in common candour, be understood in reference to that object as at that time understood, and not to the change of meaning that expression has undergone in later times. He has done me the justice to say, that he believes it was not I who declared “that no good government could subsist, nor bad one be opposed with safety, without parliamentary reform.” But whatever words I may have used, or to whatever doctrines I may have subscribed, they must be understood in reference only to the ideas of the parliamentary reform then entertained; and I solemnly declare that whatever I may have said or done on that subject, had no relation to the present prevailing systems of reformation, or any principle on which they are founded. My ideas were as different from those systems then, as my language is now. I always, as is well known to the right hon. gentleman, opposed every plan of universal suffrage and individual representation. All the words I then used, all the measures I then abetted, must be considered as bearing a relation to the ideas and views of things then entertained. By the same rules the right hon. gentleman must now

be judged: the words he uses will be understood, unless otherwise restricted, by the ideas and views of things now received; and surely he cannot deny that the expressions he has this night made use of to signify his wishes, constitute the watch-words of a party out of doors, whose real meaning is well understood, and admits of no doubt. Is it not known that they couple their ideas with his words, and hail him as a convert to their system, and a champion in their cause? If, indeed, the right hon. gentleman does mean something in a more limited and rational sense, sure I am, he must be thankful for that scrupulous vigilance and alarm that wishes to distinguish his views of a radical reform in parliament from those entertained by the Corresponding Society, expressing himself, as he accidentally does, in precisely the same words which that body has thought proper to adopt. It happens, however, that there is a farther coincidence subsisting between that body and the right hon. gentleman than mere words. He has not only, they seem to think, exalted, like them, the representative government, but looks with a jealous eye to nobility and hereditary honours; in short, disclaims every principle of government, but the representative species. This, I believe, is well known to be their opinion of him, though undoubtedly he will contend that they misconceive the meaning of his words, and that they do not imply the object they suppose. Whatever may be his meaning on other points, he has now, however, fully explained the views he entertains of parliamentary reform; and I must declare that I would forego for ever all prospect of reform, rather than incur the risk of such a one as he wishes, by his own confession, may take place. What is it he contends for? No less than that the whole elective franchise should be taken from those in whom it has long resided, and transferred to all the householders in the kingdom. This is the preliminary, not only to all supply and exertion, but to other changes hitherto unlimited by any designation of their objects. After concealing his opinion for fourteen years, as to the specific plan of reform, it now appears no less than a total change of the old system of election, and a substitute that will at once demolish all the benefits connected with it. In short, he would take from the old electors all their rights, and invest them, without reserve in new.—The right hon. gentleman has far-

ther expressed, as a general principle, that he wishes to repress increasing power and encourage protecting liberty. In the first place, I wish to know what he means by these terms. I here remark the same uncertainty and ambiguity that appear in most of his professions, and which occasion distrust and alarm in those who do not enter so readily into his views as those immediately around him. I wish to know what is this increasing power he wishes to reprobate, and what this protecting liberty he means to encourage? In another part of his speech he says, that the authority of parliament ought to be such as it was before the American war. Here also I am at a loss to reach the meaning of his words. I know of no liberty then possessed that is not now equally enjoyed. On professions so loose and indefinite, it would be absurd to rely. Unless they are circumscribed by distinct meaning, they never can be adopted as a safe and rational ground of action.

If we pass the bill, the right hon. gentleman says we shall not be considered as the representatives of the people; intimating thereby some doubt, at least, that we are not now the substantial and virtual representatives of that body. How does he make that assertion good? Because, he says, large meetings of the people have expressed their disapprobation of the bill; and therefore, if we do not adopt their opinions, he infers we have no sympathy with them, and in no sense whatever can be called their representatives. In the first place, I must observe, that these meetings were only held in the metropolis: that in other parts of the kingdom no disapprobation has been expressed; and that, even in the metropolis itself, the opposition has a good deal subsided since the modifications. In the next place, I can never agree, that this House, as the representatives of the people, are bound to bend to every partial and unsettled opinion of that body. I mean not to deny that we should give due weight to the public opinion; but it never was a principle of the constitution, that the representatives of the people should shift with every breath of popular desire. Nothing could be more inconsistent with public utility, than that legislators should be influenced by every fleeting and partial expression of the public will. How easy was it in the present case by misrepresentation, and an imperfect view of the bill in its operation, to raise in the first instance a popular cla-

mour against it! A general disinclination towards it appeared in the public meetings within the metropolis; but no sooner was the subject fully understood, and its particular hardships removed, than it was regarded in a very different light, as appeared by the proceedings of the common hall in the city. The gentlemen opposite are ready enough, on all occasions, not only to condemn the conduct of ministers, but to make the public a party to their cause. I have not only a right to consider them as prejudiced in this respect, but, from frequent experience, erroneous also; for in many cases where they have as loudly maintained that the public opinion was with them, on a fair inquiry the fact has been found to be directly the reverse. Is it in the nature of things, that a heavy and general tax can, in the first instance, be popular? It ever must be the easiest of all things, by artifice and misrepresentation, to raise a clamour against any such measure on its first breaking upon the public mind. It does not enter into my ideas of public duty, that the legislature should consult the popular opinion at the expense of public safety.

There was one part of the right hon. gentleman's speech that I am impelled to notice, from the extraordinary request it contained. He admitted the great use of unanimity, and allowed, that in this critical period in particular it was highly desirable. The mode, however, in which he wishes to obtain it is, in my opinion, somewhat singular. He says, "We the minority, conceiving ourselves right, will not yield to you the majority: but as unanimity is desirable, you should undoubtedly come over to our opinion." So that the majority are thus called upon at once to forego their opinions, though adopted after long and frequent debate, to tread back all their steps, and admit themselves to be wrong, although they know themselves to be right! This was the reasonable request his argument conveyed; and we were told that a zealous unanimity was to be expected on no other terms. In like manner, he requires us to postpone the bill indefinitely, though arising from urgent necessity, and calculated for security and defence, until he shall in his own good time return to his parliamentary duty, and, as occasion suits, unfold to our view, for separate discussion, all the parts of that radical change in our system which he projects. As to the principles of individual conduct in this House, it is not now

a general question of how far a member is authorized to secede from his attendance; but, in my opinion, that virtual representation, of which the right hon. gentleman is so fond, cannot be more completely violated than by a dereliction of duty, particularly in a moment of imminent danger to the country. And this is doubtless aggravated, if it should be done with a view of depreciating the body of which he is a member, and to alienate the affections of the people from it. I can hardly conceive how a man can act in grosser violation of his duty as a member of parliament than by such a conduct. Much of the fact, in such a case must be collected from attendant circumstances. I shall not now inquire by what motives those gentlemen acted (Mr. Burke and others), alluded to by the right hon. gentleman who seceded in the American war; but I recollect that his own secession was announced after the motion made by an hon. gentleman (Mr. Grey) for parliamentary reform; and that, in the course of that debate, the right hon. gentleman said, that, unless the measures were adopted, the House would not be any longer entitled to the respect of the people out of doors. As to the general principle, nothing can be more certain than that it is a violation of duty to desert a post committed to one's charge, and that it increases in exact proportion to the danger of those for whom we undertake the charge. Now, it did so happen, that the right hon. gentleman could not, in his whole political career, have chosen a moment of secession more encompassed with danger than the one in which he actually did secede. The motive, therefore, is at best suspicious, and the declining to attend under such circumstances led at least to inquiry, whether by keeping away he sought opportunities to effect that, by inflaming the people without these walls, which no exertion of his talents could achieve within. He retired just as the rancour of our enemy became most inveterate, and exclusively directed to this country, and when the manifestation of their malice called forth the spirit and zeal of all classes in support of our national independence and honour. Just at this juncture it was that the right hon. gentleman thought proper to retire.—On what ground, is it that gentlemen oppose this bill? Do they deny the danger that surrounds us? Do they maintain that exertion is not necessary? that it can be

suspended with safety No; they do not attempt to do either; but, as the means of obtaining their own objects, they are willing to risk the honour, welfare, and existence of the country. The right hon. gentleman had asserted his right to secede on his own motives of expediency, and, of course those who surround him will not object if I take their justification on the same principle: but the right hon. gentleman, it seems, retains his opinion of that expediency, and only now appears at the particular injunction of his constituents, to defend their local interests. How comes it, then, that he appears so surrounded with friends, who, adopting his principle of secession, have not, in the desire of their constituents, the same motive for his particular exception? Can any thing show in a stronger light the blind acquiescence of party zeal, when, in defiance of every avowed principle of their public conduct, they now attend to add to the splendor of their leader's entry?—There is one point in the constitution of this country, in which difference of opinion arises, namely, concerning the instructions of constituents to their representatives. Some think themselves bound to obey them, whatever their individual opinion may be on the subject. Others think those instructions entitled to their respect, yet follow the dictates of their own consciences. Of this latter class the right hon. gentleman professes himself to be. According, therefore, to his own admission, he now attends in spite of his own opinion of the expediency of secession, to discuss the local interest of his constituents. He, nevertheless, declined attending in that stage of the bill, in which alone he could be of service in that particular, by proposing reliefs for the particular hardships his constituents might sustain; and now, without noticing the modifications made, he objects to other particulars, without suggesting or moving any remedy! He came here to oppose its local and partial effect, yet indulges only in a general and indiscriminate opposition to it; and professing to come for the express purpose of discussing this bill, he introduces every topic that has been decided during the long period of his absence! The House must therefore see in what spirit, and for what real purpose he now appears.—On the whole, the House will decide whether they will, under the present circumstances of the country, make a great and unusual ex-

ertion to resist the enemy, or whether, on the arguments they have heard, they will suspend all defensive precautions, and leave the country open to the ruinous projects of an insolent and overbearing enemy.

The question being put, "That the word 'now' stand part of the question," the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	Mr. Sargent - - - -	} 202
	Mr. Perceval - - - -	
NOES	Mr. Jekyll - - - -	} 75
	Mr. William Smith - -	

So it was resolved in the affirmative. Then the question being put, "That the said bill be now read the third time," the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	The lord Hawkesbury -	} 196
	Mr. Adams - - - -	
NOES	General Tarleton - - -	} 71
	Mr. Alderman Combe -	

So it was resolved in the affirmative. Then the House adjourned at five o'clock in the morning.

List of the Minority.

Anson, Thomas	Jefferys, N.
Astley, Jacob	Jervoise, J. C.
Aubrey, sir John	Knight, R. P.
Barclay, Geo.	Langton, W. G.
Barlow, Hugh	Lemon, John
Beauclerk, C.	Mainwaring W.
Biddulph, Rob.	Milner, sir Wm.
Bouverie, hon. E.	Nicholls, J.
Brogden, J.	North, Dudley
Bunbury, sir T. C.	Northey, Wm.
Burch, J. R.	Norton, general
Burdett, sir F.	Peirse, Henry
Byng, George	Plumer, W.
Cavendish, lord G. H.	Rawdon, hon. J.
Clayton, sir R.	Rawdon, hon. G.
Coke, E.	Richardson, J.
Colhoun, Wm.	Russell, lord W.
Combe, H. C.	Russell, lord J.
Copley, sir L.	Scudamore, John
Courtenay, J.	Sheridan, R. B.
Denison, W. J.	Shuckburgh, sir G.
Dickenson, Wm.	Shum, George
Edwards, Bryan	Spencer lord R.
Fitzpatrick, gen.	Stanley, lord
Fletcher, sir H.	St. John, hon. St. A.
Foley, hon. A.	Sturt, Charles
Folkes, sir M. B.	Tarleton, general
Fox, right hon. C. J.	Taylor, W.
Hare, James	Thompson, Thomas
Green James	Tierney, George
Hobhouse, B.	Townshend, lord J.
Howard, Henry	Tufton, hon. Henry
Hussey, Wm.	Tyrwhitt T.

Vane, sir F.
Walpole, hon. G.
Walwyn, James
Western, C. C.
Wigley, Edm.

Wilson, R.
Winnington, sir E.
TELLERS.
Jekyll, Joseph
Smith, Wm.

Debate in the Lords on the Assessed Taxes Bill.] Jan. 9. The bill having been read a second time,

Lord Grenville said, he would refer to their Address of the 15th of November last to his majesty. [See p. 986.] That address contained the unanimous sense of both Houses of Parliament upon the state of affairs at this eventful crisis: they had there given their solemn pledge to support his majesty against the enemy, and to prosecute the war, to an honourable and secure peace. It had been deemed necessary, in order successfully to counteract the exertions of the enemy, to raise a certain portion of the supplies within the year. This necessary determination produced the present measure. From the operations of the bill, the poorer classes of society were entirely exempt, and the middling ranks were touched as lightly as possible. The great weight of the burthen fell, therefore, as in justice it ought to fall upon the higher orders of society. In this view of the subject, he must think that no serious objections could lie against the bill: it was not therefore his intention to take up their lordships time any farther; but reserving himself for the refutation of what might be objected to the measure he would move, "That the bill be committed."

Lord Carrington said, that the necessity of making a vigorous effort by raising a large sum within the year, to prevent too heavy an addition to the funded debt, was generally admitted; and any plan effectual to that purpose, would receive his hearty support; but his own opinion was, that this plan did not go far enough. The criterion of assessed taxes was not an adequate test of expenditure, much less was expenditure an adequate test of clear income. In consequence of this defect in the principle, the bill in its passage through the other House had received every modification, which the most scrupulous consideration could furnish to relieve those amongst the lower ranks, who would have been too much affected by its operation. But then, on the other hand to make the produce fully adequate to the exigency, the burthen was of necessity increased on the higher orders beyond the sum which it might, in many cases be con-

venient for them to pay, without a considerable reduction of their expenditure. All this, he conceived, might have been avoided, if, instead of raising the money in this indirect, circuitous and unequal manner, every individual had been called upon to contribute in direct proportion to his income; but the higher classes are larger in proportion than the lower. He conceived that one twentieth of real income would produce a larger contribution than one-tenth in the manner proposed by the bill. The only material objection which he had heard stated to such a plan, was, that it would occasion a public disclosure of the income of individuals. He had ideas of a way to prevent this inconvenience; but as the plan was not before the House, he would not enter minutely into the subject. He would only observe, that if this disclosure of income was an objection, it was also an objection though not, perhaps, in the same degree, to the present bill; for certainly something very like a disclosure of income might be necessary by the operation of this bill, in cases even where it might be the least desirable. He owned, that much of the inequality in this bill might be corrected, if it were admitted that the principle on which it was founded imposed on the public the duty of rendering it effectual, by affording, in the shape of voluntary contribution, a tenth part of their income in every case where the tax did not sufficiently reach them. His lordship then adverted to the situation of the country, and said, that at no time since the subversion of Europe by the barbarians of the North, had Providence permitted the infliction of such evils on social life, as had been produced by the French Revolution. Great Britain had hitherto been preserved; but how long she might enjoy the envied and happy freedom which she at present possessed, was uncertain. Her inveterate enemy was collecting on the coast a formidable force, with the avowed intentions of destroying her. These presumptuous hopes were evidently founded on our intestine divisions. His lordship had no doubt, but that if the experiment should be made, it would completely fail. He would venture to pronounce, that, violent as the spirit of party now appeared to be, the moment of the enemy's landing in this country would be the moment of perfect union. With one heart and one mind we should go forth to meet them, and should prove to the world

the irresistible energy of a high spirited and gallant nation contending for its religion, its laws, and its liberties. If this rash project should meet with the fate he had ventured to predict, then we might really expect, on the part of the enemy, a disposition to peace on just and honourable terms. But should these expectations fail, he hoped that, in another session, this bill would be repealed, and that more vigorous efforts would be made to meet the emergencies of the war, on the plan he had presumed to mention.

Lord *Holland* addressed the House for the first time. He said, that the address of both Houses, stated by the noble secretary of state to have been voted unanimously, appeared to him to be a mere statement of the exigencies of the times, under the circumstances of the country, but did not warrant any such measure as that which was now before them. I am not ready, said his lordship, to dispute with the noble secretary, that under the administration of which he forms a considerable part, for the last five years the condition of this country has grown worse and worse; for that is too plain a proposition to be debated either here or any where else. If it were enough for a member of parliament to see that the exigency of the country was great, that its distress was general, and that he was to be excused from examining the system that produced the calamity, that it was no part of his duty to inquire how money had been already applied, or what probability there was of its being duly applied in future—then, perhaps, I might agree with the noble secretary, in the truth of the preamble of the bill which is now before you; but even then I should find it my duty to oppose the enactments, because I do not think that they agree with the preamble.—When you are called upon to vote for a measure that has for its object the raising so large a sum as is here proposed to be raised, and when you must necessarily lay upon the people a much heavier burthen than any they have yet felt, it is necessary you should inquire whether those to whom millions upon millions of the money of the people have been entrusted, and who have hitherto heaped upon them in return for it distress upon distress, are about to change their system. They should hold out to you some hopes that the tremendous sacrifices which the public are now called upon to make, will be employed in a manner very

different from those millions which have hitherto been used with so little effect. That our situation is now a dreadful one, is a proposition which I believe I shall not hear denied. I shall hear, no doubt, that such situation has been brought upon us by extraordinary misfortunes. Certainly, they are extraordinary misfortunes; but to whose fault are they chiefly owing? Was it not the duty of ministers not to have plunged us into a war, without considering what these misfortunes were likely to be? But having entered into the war, ministers affect to be surprised at the exertions of the enemy. Is that wonderful, my lords? Have not sentiments been uttered in this House, and in other places, the natural effect of which is, to unite all those who have any value for the liberties of mankind? When, therefore, we hear of our present situation being such as requires great exertions, I wish the argument to have a retrospective effect, that you may see the causes of your present calamity, otherwise you will have no chance of avoiding future ruin. But I would ask, how it is possible for any rational being to expect that the people will approve of the measure now before you? Can you expect that they will go hand in hand with you in pursuing that mode which a confiding parliament has, with uniform reliance upon ministers, adopted from time to time, when you know, that in no one instance have those ministers answered the expectation of the public? I certainly do think this country ought not to grant any more money without a proper pledge, not only that ministers are to be changed, but that the present system is to be changed also. I think that change of system comprehends a true representation of the people in parliament; an entire and radical reform of abuses. You can never rationally hope for the cordial co-operation of the people without making them importantly interested in the constitution. At least allow them all the power they had at the commencement of the present contest. This is the only way to procure a safe and an honourable peace. I know it is a very common argument in favour of administration to say, "No ministers were ever in such a situation as the present are, and therefore great allowances are due to them. Why will you therefore endeavour to stop the supplies? that can only tend to encourage the enemy." I know that such an argument is frivolous in itself. I

know that a change of ministers, and also of system, at least a pledge for it from the highest authority, may be procured in a few hours. It need not detain your proceedings so long as if you waited for a noble duke who happened to have missed his robes, and you could not go on with some ceremony in the House without him. No man can justly say I am recommending confusion. The thing I want may easily be done, if your lordships set seriously about it. You should withhold the supplies until you have a pledge for a change of ministers and of system; a change that would unite the hands and hearts of the people of Ireland. That generous country, my lords, is very ungenerously treated. I do not say that you should stop the supplies until perfect tranquillity be restored there; I only say you should stop the supplies until you have a pledge for a change of ministers and a change of system. That will naturally lead to the punishment of some guilty men. Until you have that pledge, the more you vote, the more you add fuel to the fire which is consuming you, and burthens to the loads that are already bearing you down. This measure, if you adopt it, will ruin your character with the country at large. I hear unanimity often recommended; and it is much to be desired; but it never can be procured until the rights of the people are restored to them. These rights were very much infringed upon by certain bills which have prohibited public meetings in a particular manner. Until they are repealed the people cannot express, or feel properly the stake they have in the country. The voting bills of this nature is the way to produce animosity instead of unanimity; to make men hate instead of loving the government; to make the people desperate; to invite instead of deterring the enemy from invasion. I see no chance of peace while our affairs are under the direction of the present ministers. When I first looked on this bill I thought it was quite impossible it should ever pass. I considered it as a mere threat, intended to frighten us into some other measure: for it is the great object of administration to create a facility for raising money. They complain of the facility with which debts have been heaped upon us by the funding system, the better to prepare us to add more upon that plan, by frightening us with the present bill. It is otherwise inconceivable to me how they, who have

added 200 millions to our debt, should have complained of the facility of the funding system. If this bill had been introduced at the beginning of the war, it would have told you what you were to expect, and I am sure you would have revolted at it; but now ministers know, indeed they tell you, "You are in a situation from which you cannot recede, and therefore we will bleed you as we please." Open resistance would have been the effect of such a measure as this, had it been introduced at the commencement of the war. It was then stated that it was not likely to be of long continuance, nor an expensive contest; and with a fatal readiness we entered into it.—Ministers affect to be alarmed lest the French should come upon our coast.—God avert the calamity! But will this bill prevent them? Ministers have constantly raised the hopes of the people, and have as constantly disappointed them. They went to war to prevent the opening of the Scheldt. Have they succeeded? They then said a great deal about protecting our allies. Have they protected any of them? None of these things are done, although upwards of 200 millions have been expended; and the constitution of the country in many parts done away. If you would have the vigorous co-operation of the people, restore to them the constitution, and give to them a ministry in which they can confide. Nothing else can retrieve you. They will not assist a ministry that is appointed by court intrigue; they will not confide in those who are falsely called the representatives of the people; many of whom they know to be nominated by the members of this House, and therefore it is impossible that they should speak the voice of the people. I will go farther, my lords. I say it is not enough that they should speak the voice of the people; it should be known, felt, and acknowledged that they do so. Until these things are so, and until you have a ministry in which the people can confide, you never can have any prospect of success in any war in which you may be engaged, and above all, no hope for the restoration of the liberties of the people.—I confess I do not understand with what view or intention this bill is brought forward. I should really think it was to foment discord. I cannot call it a tax. I do not hesitate to declare it to be worse in point of principle than any of the plans of Robespierre. It certainly does not go

to the same extent, but it is worse, I say, in principle; for Robespierre only charged the people for what they had, but this bill makes a charge on us for what we have had, without any regard to what we have now. It is telling a man, "I will make you pay according to what you have paid. I will rely upon it that you are rich, because you have spent your money in such a manner as is most likely to have made you poor." Taking this as a tax upon income, every man must object to it, because that must be a tax, in most cases, upon industry. The statement of this income, in cases of appeal, is made subject to the examination of commissioners. What security is there that what a man swears to, in this particular, shall be true? It should be remembered, that men have in general a great repugnance to declare what their income is, and there are some to whom that declaration would be actual destruction. It is saying to a man, "If you have any objection to my killing you, I will give you leave to kill yourself."—As to the general idea, that this is not a tax that will fall upon the poor, I take that to be an impossibility; for you can never invent a tax that will fall upon many persons, and that will produce much money, without its falling ultimately upon the lower classes of society. You cannot raise seven or eight millions of money upon any part of the community within the year, without driving the mass of the people to great distress. I observe that all those who at present pay 50*l.* a year to the assessed taxes are to be assessed to five times the amount; that is, in all 300*l.* a year upon this one duty. How many do your lordships think may fail in this class? How many of them do you think may swear off for taxing them above a tenth of their income? And here give me leave to remind your lordships of the saying of dean Swift, that "two and two do not always make four at the Custom-house." These are my objections to the measure which is now before you.

The Earl of *Liverpool* said, that the two Houses having already pledged themselves to the support of the war, the first question which the present measure suggested was, whether it was eligible to raise a part of the supplies within the year? It had been objected, that the plan was novel; but granting that it were novel, it might, in the present circumstances of the country, be wise and prudent. It was not

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novel, however, for the ancient subsidy and the public supplies for a great number of years, were raised within the year, by taking a certain proportion of property, either income or capital. The taxes which had been raised since the Revolution could not have been laid, and have been so productive as they are, unless this country had improved in wealth, and become a great, rich, and commercial nation. Immediately after the Revolution the land-tax was imposed. It could be demonstrated from the acts and public proceedings of those times, that the impost then laid on land was not intended to be confined to land, but was to be extended to every species of property. Powers were then given to commissioners to examine into the fortunes of individuals. Such had been the feeling of parliament at a time when the principles of liberty were well understood. In point of policy, perhaps, such a measure might not be wholly justifiable; but such had been the sentiments of our ancestors in moments of difficulty far inferior to the present. It so happened, indeed, that the tax did at length fall upon land, though the intention was to extend it to other species of property. For his own part, he thought a tax on capital bad, because it tended to check the sources of industry. A tax upon expenditure was the only one which he considered eligible. At the period to which he had alluded, committees of the House of Commons had been appointed to consider the practicability of taxing capital, but were not able to surmount the difficulties with which it was attended. Since the Revolution the mode of raising money had been by loans, provided for by indirect taxes on expenditure. The length to which the funding system had been carried, however, and the circumstances of the present moment, might render it expedient to limit its application. A great deal of clamour had been made against this measure; but it appeared to him, that it was confined chiefly to the metropolis. As to the extent of the burthen, was it any thing like the burthen imposed in king William's time? At that period 4*s.* in the pound was imposed on land, and was intended to be extended to other property, while now the demand was limited to a tenth part of income. Taxes had increased since the Revolution, indeed; but the wealth and resources of individuals and of the public had increased in a still greater degree. It was considered as a vexatious and oppres-

sive circumstance, that in case relief was required, men would be obliged to swear, not what was the amount of their income, but what it did not exceed; yet, after the Revolution, such were the means by which the amount of the burthen imposed was proportioned to the amount of property. Nor would the money so raised impoverish the country, as if it were to be sent out of the country, or sunk in the sea. It would support the army and navy, and all the branches of manufactures connected with these services. The effect of the measure might be, to cause retrenchment in matters of luxury. It might fall upon milliners and coachmakers perhaps, but it would animate and encourage more useful manufactures, and support more valuable industry. The objects for which we had to contend were of the first magnitude, and it became the House to spare no exertions to defend the country from hostile attacks, and to protect the sources from which our prosperity flowed. With respect to the war, he should ever contend that its origin was just and necessary. The success of this country by sea had been unexampled; and if on the continent we had not been so fortunate, it was owing to those powers who did not seem sufficiently to weigh the danger in which they were placed. He thought that every man should in such a crisis be ready to make some sacrifices, and give a part of his property as a premium of insurance for the safety of the remainder.

Lord *Auckland* said, that the noble baron who had that night addressed their lordships for the first time, had stated some grounds of hostility to the bill, which ought not to pass without animadversion. The noble baron asserted, first, that the nation had been wantonly plunged into the war; and next, that the money expended hitherto had produced only disgrace and disaster. He should think it an abuse of the indulgence of the House to renew any detailed statements respecting the origin of the war. It had been again and again demonstrated, to the satisfaction of all Europe, that the war had been forced upon us by the enemy. He would however avail himself of the present occasion to mention some particulars connected with the commencement of the war, to which he could not properly have adverted with the same unreserve, whilst the transaction was more recent. It was now become matter of history; but it was a fact capable of the fullest official

proof, that in January 1793, he had received the king's commands to meet general Dumourier (in consequence of a proposal made by that officer) on the frontiers between Holland and Flanders; and was authorized and instructed to take every step, that could be made consistent with the essential interests, safety, and honour, of these kingdoms, to avert the war. He was setting out accordingly from his house at the Hague, when an officer came to him from general Dumourier to say, that the Executive council at Paris (which had pretended to wish the negotiation and interview) had suddenly declared war against Great Britain and Holland, and had ordered him to march immediately with his army into the United Provinces. Their lordships would recollect that these unprovoked hostilities were accompanied by the perfidious circumstance of seizing British property, and all British vessels in the ports of France; and by a strict embargo on all shipping, in order to keep from us the knowledge of the declaration of war, and to derive farther advantages from such perfidy. If the noble baron had known these particulars, he certainly would not have said that this country had been wantonly plunged into the war.—The noble baron's next assertion was, that the great expense incurred had produced nothing but disaster and disgrace. This strange allegation seemed to be made, in order to imply, that the money proposed to be raised by the bill under discussion, ought not to be entrusted to the present administration. He presumed that by disasters the noble baron alluded to the calamities affecting so large a part of the continent of Europe. He agreed with the noble baron as to the nature, and extent, and importance of those calamities. But though he saw and deplored the subversion of so many countries by the fate of war and by other causes; though he acknowledged with grief, and even with indignation, the degraded state of many of our late allies; he could not overlook the advantages which had in effect resulted to these kingdoms from the continental war. Advantages which had amply compensated to us the expenses incurred in that branch of the war, great and heavy as they had been.—It had been evident, from the first calling forth of the French people in a mass, by which they became a nation of military freebooters, that until some interior revolution and change of system should take

place among them, it would be idle on the part of these kingdoms to expect a safe or an honourable peace. Such a change might have been operated either by the successes of the allied armies, or by the lassitude and impatience of the French provinces under so cruel a tyranny, or by a failure of pecuniary means to support the revolutionary armaments. There had been symptoms of a disposition to return to the principles of social order towards the close of 1795, and again after the elections in 1797; but those symptoms had given way to the desperate effects of Jacobinism. With respect to the failure of pecuniary means, the probability, of such a result was not destroyed, because it had so long been baffled. That probability still subsisted and gained strength every hour, though he, for one, would never risk any prophecies respecting it. At least it must be allowed that the duration of the war had exhausted great resources resulting to the enemy from the prevalence of violence and of rapine.— And now let noble lords consider for a moment what would have been our relative position, if the menace of invasion had taken place, whilst the resources of France were entire, and whilst her own fleet and other fleets at her disposal were still unbroken and in full force? They might then indeed, with more semblance of reason and of sense, have assembled their troops on the coasts opposite to us, and have threatened these islands with invasion, conquest, ransom, and contributions: in comparison of which (independent of more essential considerations) every payment required by this bill becomes trifling and insignificant. He would again acknowledge that the continental war had been disastrous; but let it also be acknowledged, that in the mean time Great Britain had found means, by such a succession of naval victories, as surpass all the annals even of English history, to destroy the fleet, the commerce, and the navigation of the enemy. Could the noble baron seriously talk of our disgraces by the war, in the presence of his countrymen justly proud of such glorious recollections. And what then had been the result? We remain in full possession of the empire of the seas, and of inestimable advantages to our colonies, commerce, and manufactures; and with a balance of trade so large, that he was afraid even to state it; although the great and increasing influx of bullion during the last twelve months

would afford ample demonstration of it.— Such, then, was our situation at a moment when our relentless enemy, instead of meeting us with a spirit of conciliation, instead of availing herself of the too liberal sacrifices which we were disposed to make for peace, had declared that the war shall not close otherwise than by our entire subjugation. We were driven to the alternative, either to maintain our independence and superiority, or to prostrate ourselves at the feet of the mad and merciless Directory. Under such a predicament, the necessity of a large supply was most evident. It might indeed be a question, whether we should find that supply by the ordinary mode of funding, or raise a considerable proportion of it within a short and limited period. Let it then be remarked, that it was the evident object of the enemy to exhaust our funding system: this alone seemed to be a sufficient reason for evincing, by a strong exertion of public spirit, that we can find the supplies of the year without bearing hard on that system. Nothing can be more fallacious than the inference, that because the funding system has so long been used with success, it is therefore now wise to employ it to the full extent of our wants, instead of reserving it for a subsequent year, if it should then be deemed necessary to have recourse to it. There is indisputably more wealth in the kingdom at present than in any former period, still it may not be expedient to add materially to the quantity of funded securities in the market. Is it advisable to raise fifteen millions within two or three years by a contribution from the general property of the country; or shall we borrow that sum on perpetual taxes, taking the 3 per cents, suppose at 44; depreciating the public credit; exhausting our future means; and loading ourselves and our posterity with 1,500,000*l.* a year perpetual taxes? In his opinion, the present bill was not a tax either on capital, income, or expenditure; it was a contribution rated on the visible criterion of the assessed taxes, subject to various modifications and exemptions. He was aware of the objections to which the measure of estimating the capacity of the contributor by the amount of his assessed taxes stands fairly liable. In many instances it would bear inadequately on those of great property and on rich capitalists. And, certainly it was to be wished that in a public crisis, when the danger calls for some sacrifice in order to preserve great and

essential interests, all should contribute in an equal proportion, with the exception only of those, who, by their labour or otherwise, derive a mere sufficiency for themselves and for their families. The prejudices or good sense of the country were not prepared to allow an inquiry into the circumstances of individuals: the measure must remain subject to great inequalities, notwithstanding all the provisions and modifications which had been so anxiously introduced into the bill. The next mode, short of a disclosure of circumstances, is the sort of declaration on oath required by the bill in case of appeal: and here he would confess, that he should have had no objection, if the necessity imposed on many, by the *quantum* of the requisition, to declare upon oath that what they pay is not less than a tenth part of their incomes, had been extended to all incomes whatever above a certain limit. It was difficult to say, why A. B. in consequence of being taxed more than a tenth of his income, should be driven to a declaration of income; whilst C. D. because he is taxed perhaps only a twentieth or a fortieth, should stand exempt from any declaration. There was one more point on which he could have gone farther towards enforcing an equality of contribution; he could have stated, that incomes arising from land and houses, or from the interest of capital, should pay in a larger proportion, than incomes dependent on annuities for life, or on possessions, or on trade.—But notwithstanding these admissions, he would venture to assert, that in the result there would be very few cases indeed, in which the hardship ought not to be borne with cheerfulness, when compared with the great interests that every individual has at stake. The question to be asked is not whether one individual is liable to pay proportionably more than another, but whether in any given case the extraordinary aid required will be more than ought to be given? And with respect to opulent persons, many of whom may be insufficiently reached by the bill, he must loudly say, that every man of that description ought in conscience, honour, and personal wisdom, to come forward, and should disdain to avail himself of the delicacy and tenderness of parliament which had not required any strict examination into incomes or property. The measure was novel; but the public situation also was novel. It was a temporary defalcation of a small part of our enjoyments

for the security of the remainder. That defalcation could in no case go to the demand of more than a tenth: it was incumbent on all that in no case it should go to the payment of less than a tenth.

The Duke of *Bedford* said, he expected that some better reason would have been given for agreeing to this measure, than the address which the noble secretary had read. Did the noble lord imagine that a general pledge of support obliged the House to acquiesce in any plan for raising the supplies? Must their lordships renounce all pretension to exercise the power of deliberation on the means by which the supply was to be raised, because they might have recognized the necessity of exertion? The first question which occurred was, whether it was expedient to raise a part of the supplies within the year? Next, whether it was expedient at the present moment? And then, whether the bill before the House was the best mode by which such a plan could be carried into effect? At a time when the public funds were so reduced, when by the laws which regulated the rate of interest, government had a monopoly of money—was this a time to call upon men for contributions which they could not raise? When land must be sold at a loss, and mortgaging was out of the question: when those who had money in the funds could not sell out without enormous loss—was this a time to make demands which individuals had no means to answer? The effect of the measure would be to occasion a general reduction of expenditure, and consequently a great defalcation of the public revenue. What would be the consequence to the revenue of the sudden retrenchment which this measure rendered necessary? The old taxes were about seventeen millions; if, then, a tenth part of the income of the country is required by this bill, the reduction of a tenth part of this income will on these seventeen millions create a defalcation of 1,740,000*l.* It was said that government received the money, and that it would be employed in supporting other branches of useful manufactures. But would not such a sudden increase occasion a very great reduction of expenditure; and was it not seen that the old taxes were most affected by the new burthens that were imposed? Again, was this a proper time to call upon the people for so great an additional sum, when the present taxes could not be obtained without

the greatest difficulty. Did their lordships consider what must be the consequence of raising one third more upon the people of this country, than they ever yet paid in one year? Were they aware of the retrenchments that would be necessary, and the decay of revenue that would ensue? With regard to stopping the supplies, it was clear that his noble friend meant that he was not willing to agree any farther to supplies, till some pledge was given that they would be employed more to the advantage of the country than they had hitherto been. The bill was obviously unjust, and no situation, he conceived, ought to induce that House to sanction injustice. The income of industry was taxed with the same severity as income from capital. Was it just to drive men, not merely to retrench luxuries, but to abridge what habit had rendered necessities, to pay this impost? One principal ground on which the measure was defended was, the ultimate saving it would occasion to posterity. He had heard a person in another place argue, that to raise fifteen millions in this way instead of funding, would be an ultimate saving of thirty millions. If such an assertion had been made by a school-boy, he would have been sent back to his arithmetic to learn better. But the measure was to intimidate the enemy. How could any man conceive that a measure that would be carried into effect with so much vexation and oppression, could produce that unanimity by which the enemy could be intimidated? It was said to be calculated to relieve the stockholder, but he could not see what claim the stockholder had to such relief. The country had already contributed sufficiently to the relief of the stockholder, and it was fair that he should take his share in the public burthen. With respect to the declaration of income, all writers on public liberty admitted that disclosure was both impolitic and oppressive. It would not be of advantage to the rich, it could only be used by those to whom the effect of disclosure would be most prejudicial. It afforded a choice between ruin and submission: ruin to credit by disclosure, and ruin by contribution beyond ability. The injustice of making men pay for past expenditure was too glaringly unjust to stand in need of any farther illustration. The measure would be as oppressive in its operations, as it was unjust in its principle. To reject the measure would not be to refuse

supplies. It would only oblige the minister to resort to some mode of raising money less oppressive to the public.

The Earl of *Kinnoul* was sorry that party zeal should thus be involved with the principle of the bill. What was it that was required by a noble lord (*Holland*) previous to his permitting the supplies to be granted? Nothing less than a radical reform in parliament, and a fundamental change of system. But was the noble lord and the House prepared to give this pledge for reform and change of system, without giving a question so momentous even a moment's consideration? Was it at a crisis urgent and dangerous as the present was, that such speculative opinions were to be agitated and indulged in? As to the present measure its operation, like that of all taxes, must fall heavy on the country; but it must be agreed that, when we attend to the present declarations of France respecting this nation, it is necessary to make an unusual exertion. To call forth that exertion was the object of the present bill, and he saw no other measure by which such exertion could be more efficaciously produced. A noble duke had said, that we might still resort to the funding system, in order to raise the supplies. Whether this might not be done was at the present moment a matter of very delicate discussion; not that he meant to insinuate that this system was exhausted, but to contend that sound policy admonished us not to have recourse to it under the present circumstances of the country. As to the best criterion of income, he could not see that a more perfect one than that of expenditure could be taken. The bill was said to be unpopular; but all tax-bills must, from their nature, be unpopular, and it was much to the honour of the right hon. gentleman who proposed it, that he was not deterred by dread of unpopularity from performing any great and important duty.

Lord *Thurlow* said, that as to the bill under consideration, he was not averse to avow that, as far as it was an endeavour to raise within the year a considerable portion of the supplies, it was, in his mind, a wise and politic measure, provided it could be put in practice without grinding the people too severely. The operation of the bill had been strongly objected to by some noble lords, as tending in many instances to be extremely partial. He could not deny but that, in many instances,

it might operate very unequally; but it should not be forgotten, that in a comprehensive scheme of taxation, it was impossible to ascertain with mathematical precision what portion each individual should pay. Every scheme of taxation should undoubtedly proceed on the principle of an equal assessment on property, in payment of that protection which government afforded to that property. The great question, therefore, was, whether the best criterion had been adopted in order to discover and appreciate the amount of property, so as to avoid its producing inequality of burthens. When he considered this part of the subject, it by no means occurred to him, that income was a fair measure of property, especially the income of professional men, and of persons embarked in trade, for the income of such persons must always be exceedingly variable; they may be often obliged to change this year the mode of living they pursued the last year: as at one time their trade and profits might be flourishing and at another time sink almost to nothing. Their income could not, therefore, be, in any respect, a fair criterion of property. Even if it could be considered as such, still the assessed taxes should not be selected as a proper measure of expenditure, especially with regard to persons in business, who from the nature of their calling, paid a considerable sum to the assessed taxes, merely for the instruments of their trade, and in order to keep up the appearance in life which was so necessary to secure the esteem and consideration of the world. But this was not the objection which principally weighed upon his mind. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that expenditure was the criterion of income, and that the assessed taxes were a fair measure of expenditure, still he was at a loss to account upon what principle it was that the expenditure of the last year should be considered as the exclusive criterion upon which a fair and adequate judgement was to be formed of the expenditure of future years. If expenditure was to be viewed as the general criterion, then the expenditure of every year should be the criterion of its income.

Lord Grenville said, that in discussing the bill it was somewhat extraordinary that the noble duke and the learned lord were at odds, the former disputing that which the latter agreed did not admit of a doubt; namely, that some measure of this kind

was absolutely necessary to meet the insidious designs of the enemy. This was not the statement of an individual who could be said to be interested in the fate of the question; but the learned lords authority, opposed to that of the noble duke and of the noble lord who opened the opposition of the night. It was therefore to be taken for granted, that great exertion ought to be made, either in the funding way or in this mode; and he hoped the learned lord's words would be remembered. But it so happened, that funding was a part of this measure, which comprised both modes; one great advantage of which was, that it held out to the enemy the futility of his only hope, and showed him that the country had within itself not only the means, but the spirit and determination to use them; that they could not only have recourse, if requisite, to the funding system, but that they could also have recourse to a system which had not been applied to in any period of our history, or in the best times; and he recommended it to those noble lords who opposed the bill, to consider, that there was nothing which could be more likely to check the presumption of the French, than that they should see that the pressure from which they derived their hopes of ruining this country, was not felt.—The noble duke had said, that it would be a measure of better policy to raise the sum wanted by a permanent annuity; but surely their lordships must be aware that parliament in doing so, would throw the burthen as much upon the poor as upon the rich. This mode of taxing the poor to alleviate the burthens of the opulent might perhaps suit the feelings and convenience of the noble duke, but parliament in their wisdom would speak a better language, and say that they would rather burthen persons of the same class of the noble duke, than let any part of it light upon the indigent. As to the objection that had been made to the measure, on the supposition that it would create a defalcation in the revenue, it was not more applicable to this than to any other mode of taxation, for he would venture to assert that it was impossible to increase the taxes in any way, without producing some effect upon the revenue. And he put to their lordships, whether, if this plan did succeed, the country would not stand in a prouder situation than if so much money were raised by loan, at the price that must now be given for it. The

learned lord had concurred in the opinion, that the sum ought to be raised within the year, but had disapproved of the mode of raising it, as the criterion which had been taken, would make the distribution of the burthen unequal; but certainly the learned lord knew as well as any one the impossibility of attaining perfect theoretic equality. No system of taxation ever did approximate equality. The land-tax, for example, was never said or thought by any body to bear equally upon all; but yet it had never been objected to, or thrown out upon that account. Would the noble duke say that the land-tax bill ought not to pass because it did not bear equally upon every body? He challenged any noble lord to point out to him a single tax that did bear equally. There was not one; for there was no article whatsoever that was equal in necessity, or equally used by all. And should that be made an objection now, which never was held an objection before; or did their lordships hope to get over a difficulty now that never had been got over before? Equality in taxation was to the full as visionary as any other kind of equality. It was true, as had been stated, that the assessed taxes were no certain criterion of income, nor income of property. If, then, neither a tax founded on income or on assessments would do, what would their lordships say of a direct tax upon property? How was that property to be ascertained? Suppose it were possible to get an accurate account of property, did their lordships reflect upon the various ways in which it might be placed, and the incessant fluctuations that would baffle every attempt to apply the laws of taxation to it. How, then, could it best be got at? By expenditure only; and if this was a tax on expenditure, with certain salutary modifications and checks, it could not be maintained to be an objection, that it cannot easily be comprised in a simple logical definition. The learned lord had asked why the criterion was taken according to the expenditure in 1797, and not in 1798. To this he would answer, because in 1797 every man laid his plan of expenditure without any view to taxation, and it was therefore the proper test of ability; whereas, in 1798, the expenditure would be regulated, not according to the ability of each person, but to his disposition to contribute to the exigencies of the state. As to the objection that the tax was not

voluntary, had they ever heard such a principle maintained, or ever suggested, as that no tax should be laid that was not voluntary. Indeed, such a principle would be so much at variance with practice, that it could not subsist; for no case could be supposed or did exist, in which a tax could be voluntary. And as to the objections which had been made on the subject of calling for a disclosure of property, it was one which would apply at least in as great a degree to any of the modes proposed by the noble lords. Every objection which had been started applied as strongly to the funding system as to this: their lordships would see that borrowing this money would tend to create a farther lowering of the funds, and would, to all intents and purposes, be forcing upon the holders of stock a heavy loss by the strong hand of compulsion. Three objections had been made to this, every one of which applied to every other plan, but to the funding, more than to this: and two of them applied to the funding plan in a greater degree than to this. The objection which had been made on account of the dealer upon a small capital vanished, because such a dealer would not come within the provisions of the act. The small farmer, too, was entirely exempted; the large farmer was to pay no more than twice the amount he now paid; and the intermediate farmers paid only in proportion. The noble duke and the noble lord had clashed most violently in their opinions; the former had declared it to be his opinion that the subject should not be treated as a party question; while the latter had insisted that it should be considered as a mode of pushing ministers from office, by stopping the supplies, and had, in order to fix criminality on ministers, stated certain declarations supposed to be made by them respecting the object of the war. While he congratulated the House upon the accession to his seat of a young nobleman who promised so fairly to be an ornament to it, and that soon, he could not help saying that he should rather have expected to have heard a statement of those declarations from some noble lord who had been in the House at the time they were supposed to have been made. He did not much wonder that the idea of ministers having plunged the country into war, asserted so frequently as it had been, and reiterated daily in the public prints, should have made a deep impres-

sion upon the noble lord, endowed as he seemed to be with all the warmth of a youthful imagination; but how far that charge was true was now put beyond the reach of contest by what the noble baron (Auckland) had that day said, and by the American declarations. If any man still entertained a doubt upon the subject, let him read a pamphlet written by Mr. Harper, an American, wherein he would find how the French had fallen upon this and upon every other country. He knew no subject which more fully showed the principles of France than her conduct to America. In the professions of France to America, in the partiality of America to France, and in the return made for that partiality, it might be seen that France uniformly acted on the same principle there as in Europe. In fact, not a single day passed over which did not open some fresh proof of the long lurking mischievous designs of France; but in the book of Mr. Harper a fact was stated, which, if all the rest of the conduct of France could be done away, would be conclusive, viz. that long before the war, measures were taken by France to excite America to hostility against England. And his lordship declared, that there was not a day in which the course of his business did not open to him some new proof of the wicked designs of France. Not more than twenty-four hours ago he had stumbled upon some letters (possibly they might yet be produced), which contained irresistible proof, from persons of official capacity, to the above effect; some from a noble lord near him, then on the continent, (lord Auckland) were among the number. But he assured the noble lord that he was most egregiously mistaken if he supposed ministers had ever stated that the object of the war was the opening of the Scheldt, or the support of their allies merely; on the contrary it was, that the enemy had, by various attacks on our allies, induced the necessity of our taking up arms, and would perhaps have driven us to the necessity of declaring war, if he had not anticipated the point by attacking us, and interfering in the internal policy of this country. The noble baron had advised the House to suspend the progress of the bill; and the noble duke fell in with an explanation, advising to suspend it until a pledge was given to the House and the country of a radical reform; that is to say, a reform of parlia-

ment, and of supposed abuses in this country; and a reform of parliament, a dereliction of the system of coercion, and a grant of their just rights to the people of Ireland; a proposal of no less magnitude than that, with the enemy at our gates, we were to suspend all supplies, and stop all means of resistance, until a reform or a pledge of reform, was granted. If, indeed, the House withheld supplies till then, reform would come, accompanied by the arms of the enemy, who had said plainly, that he relied upon our divisions in England, and intended to come, in order to produce a reform, that was to say, a revolution in this country. The noble and youthful lord had a warm imagination; but he wished to know what pledge he meant; who was it that could take upon him to pledge the parliament of England to abandon their principles, and give up the country a prey to France? But if any men were found so desperate as to offer a pledge for this parliament, who in that House could venture to pledge the parliament of Ireland to subvert her government, to break it off from England, and to destroy individual security of life and property in that country? But besides all this, he intreated their lordships to consider what extravagant impropriety it would be in them to agree with either the noble duke or the noble lord. The House of Commons, the constitutional guardians of the people's purse, has said to the king, "We will give you a supply;" but the noble lords say, "No; you shall not get it till you give a pledge to overthrow the government." He exhorted the noble lords to consider the question maturely, and he asked them, whether all who wished for reform, were agreed as to the mode of it? He believed not; he would not injure the noble lord so far as to suppose that he, for one, meant the same kind of reform proposed by the Corresponding Society, although he held the same language as that society held. Perhaps it did not occur to the noble lord, that it was necessary to determine what was meant by radical reform, before he pledged himself for it. He said, he trusted that their lordships and the parliament had a pledge among themselves of a very opposite nature; namely, that they would maintain the constitution unimpaired and inviolate: he trusted that the sovereign was resolved to fulfil that oath which he had sworn to keep sacred,

namely, to maintain the constitution inviolate in church and state; and that the people at large were not less resolved than either, and that they would never forget one leading truth—that to change the system of representation would be nothing short of revolution. If parliament could so far betray their constituents and the country as to agree to a transfer of the rights of election from those who now possess them to the people, did any man think it would stop short of pulling down the constitution, which has been established for ages, to set up the crude visionary theories of modern reformers in its stead? Would they not be told, by the Corresponding Society, as the reformers were told in France—"You have acted aristocratically and done nothing—you call this reform, but nothing is reform that falls short of universal suffrage." The partizans of which said universal suffrage, were infinitely more numerous than those of moderate reform; and so far from their lordships pledging themselves to a radical reform, he hoped they would pass the bill, and grant the supplies, if for no other reason, at least as a means of stopping the progress of a radical reform.

Lord *Holland* said, he must take notice of some expressions of the noble secretary, which had been rather personally addressed to him. In regard to his declaration about the present exigency of our affairs, and the necessity of vigorous exertions, no man felt more sincerely, nor had expressed more warmly his conviction, than he had done, the necessity of such exertions. It was his feeling on this subject that had given rise to the observations that he had ventured to make on a measure which, so far from being a measure of strength, was a measure of weakness; so far from holding forth the promise of vigour, was as delusive in point of real resource, as it was grinding in its operation. He had said that he would give his cheerful assent to a well digested plan of taxation that should be voluntary, the only genuine source of supply; and that he proposed to suspend this feeble, as well as unjust measure, in order that they might have time to devise a more equal and a more effectual means of raising the sum necessary. The latter part of the noble lord's speech had been directed particularly against what he had advanced with respect to a pledge, and was indeed an attack made upon him for

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that expression. It would have been well if the noble lord had been pleased to state correctly the expression to which he had been giving so loud and so lofty an answer. He hardly thought it possible that words so simple could have been so misinterpreted, or misunderstood. In the pledge that he was desirous of obtaining, he had used no ambiguous, no undefined terms. He had stated correctly what he wanted; namely, the dismissal of his majesty's present ministers, as a preliminary to the appointment of men in whom the nation could have just confidence for the restoration of their rights, and for a system of administration founded upon parliamentary reform. This expression was sufficiently clear and intelligible, one would think, to every noble lord; it was not new language in this country; yet out of this the noble lord had made a vehement appeal to their lordships on the fundamental change that was to be made on the vital system of the British government. And, as if this were not enough, he had called in the alarm also of meddling with the parliament of Ireland. In the moment of the discontents of that kingdom, was the parliament of Ireland to be called upon to unsay all that they had said, and to concede parliamentary reform, after declaring that it would be fatal to the government of that country? Now, what was the fact with respect to the parliament of Ireland on this subject? All their lordships knew that after having, with disdain and contempt, kicked over their bar the petitions of the people praying for parliamentary reform, the petitioners had gone to the foot of the throne with their representations, not to his majesty's ministers; and the consequence of their petitions was, an instruction was sent out to grant the reform which was prayed for. Accordingly, the self-same parliament that had rejected the petitions with so much scorn, this jealous parliament, did resolve that a reform in the representation of the people would be a wise and salutary measure. This reform, which the noble secretary now said they thought was revolution [The lord chancellor here called to order.] Lord *Holland* said, he was sensible that the discussion of parliamentary reform, much less any allusion to Ireland, was not strictly in order that night, but the noble lord had made it necessary for him to say so much. The noble secretary had drawn forth a dreadful charge against him, that

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he wanted to change the fundamental basis of the British constitution, as if he had reviled it, and said it was not a good and a happy constitution for a rational people to live under. Now, he certainly had not said one word against the constitution. He presumed the noble secretary of state spoke so highly of the constitution from the impulse of a generous maxim, "de mortuis nil nisi bonum;" he would never speak ill of the dead. The sort of argument that the noble lord had used, reminded him of some humorous verses by one of the best poets:

"Thus Harlequin extoll'd his horse,
Fit for the war, or race, or course:
One fault he had, a fault indeed!
And what was that? the horse was dead."*

So of the genuine constitution of England: it had every excellent quality that could endear it to a rational or a free people; but alas! it was no longer in existence. What he wanted, and he had expressed himself in clear language, was, to revive that constitution in its purity, and the means he proposed was, not by any innovating course, but by restoring to the people a just representation in parliament. In doing this, he had no hesitation in saying that the species of reform which had been accurately described in another place, met with his perfect concurrence.

The House then divided: Contents, 50; Proxies, 23—73: Not-Contents, 6.

List of the Minority.

Duke of Bedford	Lord Holland
Earl of Peterborough	Lord King
Earl of Oxford	Lord Ponsonby.

Protest against the Assessed Taxes Bill.] The following Protest was entered on the Journals against the commitment of the Bill:

"Dissentient,

1. "Because, we conceive that in the present circumstances no grant of money by parliament, can alone be sufficient to extricate the country from its alarming and critical situation.

"When the exigencies of the state are such as to demand large supplies from the people, our duty is not confined to the bare consideration of the necessity of the case, or the mode of levying the money. We are not, from the pressure of circumstances, and the approach of danger, hastily to concur in laying additional burthens

on our fellow-subjects, without insuring to the public a wise application of the money so raised, and without due precautions for directing the efforts of the people to their only legitimate object, the benefit of the community. A neglect of this, the most important of all parliamentary duties, must produce, and in our opinions it has already produced, consequences the most fatal to the dignity of the nation, the stability of the government, and the interests of the people. In the unconditional compliance with the demands of the executive government, again proposed as the remedy, we perceive the real and fatal source of the evil. Year after year his majesty's ministers have grounded their application to parliament upon the urgency of the occasion, and the extraordinary exigencies of the state. To satisfy their demands, to enable them to encounter the dangers, and remove the difficulties in which we were involved, every article of luxury or convenience have been taxed, the resources of the country has been exhausted, and sums unparalleled in history have been entrusted to their disposal; yet, year after year the occasion has become more urgent, the exigencies more pressing, and the dangers more immediate. The security of the nation has been shaken in the same proportion as the prosperity of the country has been impaired, external danger has kept pace with internal distress, and the exertions which have impoverished the people, and shaken our credit, have purchased nothing but the loss of national honour, the defection of allies, and the failure of every great object of the war.

"If the whole force of Great Britain and Ireland, aided by grants, lavished beyond the example of the most improvident times, assisted by the most powerful monarchs of Europe, has proved insufficient in the hands of ministers to secure the blessings of peace, or even to avert the present awful circumstances of the country, it seems inconsistent with reason to expect that the painful efforts of an empire, whose means are exhausted by taxation, whose spirits are damped by failure, and whose affections are in part alienated by oppression, can, without a single ally, under the direction of the same men, resist with effect a powerful and exasperated enemy, elated with success, strengthened by conquest, and supported by the united powers of Holland and of Spain. In this situation of affairs,

* Prior's Alma.

to persevere in the system which has produced it, to confide in the ministers who, with the aid of so many millions, have been unable to avert it, evinces, in our opinion, a total disregard of the common maxims of prudence, a wanton rejection of the lessons of experience, and a determined neglect of the most important of our parliamentary duties. Under the persuasion, therefore, that the dangers with which we are now threatened, are the result of force directed to objects at once impracticable, and foreign to the interests of this country; that they are the necessary consequences of a misapplication of the public money, and the natural fruits of the incapacity and profusion of those to whom it has been improvidently entrusted, we deemed it our duty not to sanction any grant to the executive government, until a pledge was given to the House, by the removal of his majesty's ministers, of a complete alteration in his councils. We held it neither just to impose, nor reasonable to require any additional sacrifices from our fellow subjects, until some prospect was held out to the people of a reform of that House which had granted, and a censure of those ministers who have lavished sums so enormous, without any benefit resulting to the community. We thought that while his majesty's affairs were conducted by those who originally engaged in this calamitous contest, and who can neither carry on war or negotiation with honour, advantage, or success, no grant of money by parliament, no sacrifices on the part of the people could afford a reasonable hope that the blessings of peace would be speedily restored or permanently secured. We imagined, that until some earnest was given of a radical alteration of the system of terror and coercion in Ireland, of the repeal of the two bills, the one intituled, "An Act for the Safety and Preservation of his Majesty's Person and Government against Seditious Practices and Attempts," and the other intituled, "An Act for the more effectually Preventing Seditious Meetings and Assemblies," of economy in public expenditure, and diminution of the enormous patronage and influence of the Crown, we were not warranted in expecting that cheerful co-operation of the people, which being at once the indication and result of a reciprocal confidence between the government and the governed, can only be restored by the restoration of the ancient and happy practice of a constitution un-

disfigured by coercive laws, of a parliament speaking the sense of the people, and a ministry dependant on the voice of the parliament.

2. "Because it appears to us that any attempt to raise the supplies within the year, in the present exhausted state of the country, must be attended with the greatest difficulty and danger.

3. "Because were we to allow that the principle of raising the supplies by contribution instead of loan, was just, wise, and expedient, yet under the present ministers it would appear to us attended with the utmost danger, as the real expenses of the year have generally exceeded by nearly one-half their calculation; and thus any regulations for the equal distribution of the burthen which were adopted upon the first calculation, might be rendered ineffectual by subsequent and more extensive demands.

4. "Because if the bill is intended as a tax upon expenditure, its retrospective operation is arbitrary and cruel in the extreme, and altogether repugnant to the usages of our ancestors, the faith of civilized governments, and the common dictates of humanity and justice. If it is intended as a tax upon income, in our opinion the criterion proposed is objectionable and inadequate; and above all, as income is of various descriptions, sometimes arising from permanent and disposable capital, sometimes from precarious or temporary possessions, and sometimes from labour, talents, or industry, we deem any attempt to proportion the burthen to the income, in itself unjust, unequal, and impolitic. If it is intended as a tax upon property, neither in the original criterion, viz. the assessed taxes of 1795, nor in the proposed relief, do we recognize any just principles of taxation, or perceive any fair or adequate method suggested for the impartial distribution of the burthen.

5. "Because the relief proposed in the bill to those who may, by the increase of their assessed taxes, be liable to pay more than the tenth of their income, requires a disclosure of their pecuniary circumstances, which is contrary to the customs and prejudices of Englishmen, and repugnant to the principles of the constitution; and which to persons engaged in commerce or trade, must be attended with yet greater inconveniences than the payment of more than the tenth of their income. Furthermore, this regulation appears to

us an indirect breach of the faith so often and so sacredly pledged to the stockholder, for should the whole of the income of any individual claiming this relief consist in a dividend upon stock, a tenth of that income is immediately sacrificed, and the dividend in violation of the faith of the parliament and the nation, diminished one tenth by the intervention of government.

6. "Because the operation of this bill is not confined to a definite period of time, but by the most wanton violation of justice, remains in force till a certain sum is produced; thus extracting from the honest the deficiencies which may have been occasioned by accidental circumstances, by the designs or the distress of individuals, by the favour or the neglect of the collectors.

(Signed) "HOLLAND,
"OXFORD & MORTIMER."

King's Message respecting the calling out of the Supplementary Militia.] Mr. Secretary Dundas presented the following Message from his Majesty:

"GEORGE R.

"His Majesty thinks proper to acquaint the House of Commons, that his majesty has received various advices of preparations made, and measures taken, in France, apparently in pursuance of the design, openly and repeatedly professed, of attempting the invasion of these kingdoms.

"His majesty is firmly persuaded that, by the zeal, courage, and exertion, of his subjects, struggling for whatever is most dear to them, such an enterprise, if attempted, will terminate in the confusion and ruin of those who may be engaged in it: but his majesty, in his anxious concern for the safety and welfare of his faithful people, feels it incumbent on him to omit no suitable precaution which may contribute to their defence at so important a conjuncture. His majesty, therefore, in pursuance of the act, passed in the last session of parliament, for providing for the augmentation of the militia, has thought it right to make this communication to the House of Commons, to the end that his majesty may cause the said militia, or such part thereof as he shall think necessary, to be drawn out and embodied, and to march as occasion shall require.

G. R."

Resolved, *nem. con.* "That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty our dutiful thanks for

graciously communicating to this House, that he has received various advices of preparations made, and measures taken, in France, apparently in pursuance of the design, openly and repeatedly professed, of attempting the invasion of these kingdoms.

"To assure his majesty, that he may rely on the continued and decided support of this House, in this important conjuncture; and that we are firmly persuaded that the zeal and courage of his faithful subjects, struggling for all that is most dear to them, will be vigorously exerted in repelling every insult, and will, under the blessing of Providence, be effectual for disappointing the ambitious and extravagant designs of the enemy, and turning them to the confusion of those who may be engaged in them."

King's Message for granting Annuities to Lords Duncan and St. Vincent.] Feb. 9. Mr. Pitt presented the following Message from his Majesty:

"GEORGE R.

"His Majesty having taken into his royal consideration the eminent and signal service performed by Adam Viscount Duncan, one of the admirals of the blue, on the coast of Holland, in an engagement, in the month of October last, with a Dutch fleet under the command of admiral De Winter, not only highly honourable to himself, but greatly beneficial to his majesty's kingdoms; and being desirous to bestow upon the said Adam viscount Duncan some considerable and lasting mark of his royal favour, as a testimony of his majesty's approbation of the said service, and for this purpose to give and grant unto the said Adam viscount Duncan, and to the two next succeeding heirs male of the body of the said Adam viscount Duncan, to whom the title of viscount Duncan shall descend, for and during their lives, a nett annuity of 2,000*l.* per annum; but his majesty not having it in his power to grant an annuity to that amount, or to extend the effect of the said grant beyond the term of his own life, recommends it to his faithful Commons to consider of a proper method of enabling his majesty to grant the same, and of extending, securing, and settling, such annuity to the said Adam viscount Duncan, and to the two next persons on whom the title of viscount Duncan shall descend, in such manner as shall be thought most effectual, for the benefit of

the said Adam viscount Duncan, and his family.
G. R."

Feb. 13. Mr. Pitt presented the following Message from his Majesty :

"GEORGE R.

"His Majesty having taken into his royal consideration the eminent and signal service performed by John earl Saint Vincent, one of the admirals of the blue, off Cape Saint Vincent, on the coast of Portugal, in an engagement, in the month of February last, with a Spanish fleet under the command of Don Josef de Cordova, not only highly honourable to himself, but greatly beneficial to his majesty's kingdoms; and being desirous to bestow upon the said John earl Saint Vincent some considerable and lasting mark of his royal favour, as a testimony of his majesty's approbation of the said service, and for this purpose to give and grant unto the said John earl Saint Vincent, and to the two next succeeding heirs male of the body of the said John earl Saint Vincent, to whom the title of earl Saint Vincent shall descend, for and during their lives, a nett annuity of 2,000*l.* per annum; but his majesty not having it in his power to grant an annuity to that amount, or to extend the effect of the said grant beyond the term of his own life, recommends it to his faithful Commons to consider of a proper method of enabling his majesty to grant the same, and of extending, securing, and settling, such annuity to the said John earl Saint Vincent, and to the two next persons on whom the title of earl Saint Vincent shall descend, in such manner as shall be thought most effectual, for the benefit of the said John earl Saint Vincent and his family.
G. R."

Feb. 14. The House went into a committee on the said Messages, in which it was resolved, after some conversation, *nem. con.* 1. "That the annual sum of 2,000*l.* be granted to his majesty, out of the consolidated fund, to commence from the 14th of February, 1797, and be settled in the most beneficial manner upon the present earl Saint Vincent, and the two next succeeding heirs male of the body of the said earl Saint Vincent, to whom the title of earl Saint Vincent shall descend.

2. "That the annual sum of 2,000*l.* be granted to his majesty, out of the consolidated fund, to commence from the 11th of October, 1797, and be settled in the

most beneficial manner upon the present viscount Duncan, and the two next succeeding heirs male of the body of the said viscount Duncan, to whom the title of viscount Duncan shall descend."

Esten's Divorce Bill.] March 2. On the motion for the second reading of the bill for granting a Divorce between Mr. Esten and Harriot his wife,

Lord *Auckland* called the attention of their lordships to the circumstances under which the application was made, and which, in his opinion, were of such a nature, that admitting every allegation of the Bill to be proved, he would decidedly give his negative to any farther proceeding. He was not prepared to assert that the circumstances were such as to imply actual collusion between the parties, but they at least afforded grounds of suspicion, and seemed to place the petitioner in a predicament not to be entitled to the special interposition of the legislature, to relieve him from consequences which his own conduct seemed to have facilitated. The petitioner was married in 1784. Some years afterwards he was obliged to abscond, and left his wife under an equivocal kind of protection at the Dublin theatre, and under articles of separation between them. He had learnt the alleged adultery in 1794, and had brought his action in the courts of law in Hilary Term 1797. On the whole, the case was such as that House could not entertain. It was better adapted to the proceedings for divorces before the municipality of Paris. [A loud cry of "Hear, hear!" from the bishop of Rochester and others.] He was happy to remark that his observation engaged the attention of the right reverend bench. It certainly was an awful moment, in which it became that House to be particularly on its guard against the encouragement in any shape or form, of any circumstance whatever tending to the French immoralities. In his cool and deliberate opinion, those immoralities were the most dangerous mode of attack that the enemy could make. He dreaded them more than any other kind of invasion, whatsoever menaces might precede it, or whatsoever shape it might assume. He was not certain whether the forms of the House would allow him to oppose the introduction of counsel; but, should they permit counsel to be heard, it was his intention afterwards to move for the rejection of the Bill.

The Duke of *Athol* perfectly coincided in the sentiments just delivered by the noble lord, and if he had any thing farther to observe, it would be to oppose the introduction of counsel, so strongly did his mind revolt at the manner and nature of the application. Such a determination on the part of their lordships would strongly mark their opinion of the case, and operate with the salutary force of a striking example.

The *Lord Chancellor* observed, that whatever might be their lordships opinion of the case, and whatever points of morality it was likely to affect, yet it would be in this, as well as in every other case, the regular course of proceeding to hear counsel upon a petition. It afterwards remained with their lordships to adopt such a decision as in their wisdom and justice they should deem meet.

The Bishop of *Durham* said, that were it not for the deference he felt for the high authority of the learned lord, he should have been disposed in the first instance to oppose any farther proceeding in the case. A remark made by a noble lord, was undoubtedly of a nature to arrest the attention of the House, viz. the evil that must attend the introduction of French morality into these kingdoms. The French rulers, while they despaired of making any impression on us by the force of arms, attempted a more subtle and alarming warfare, by endeavouring to enforce the influence of their example, in order to taint and undermine the morals of our ingenuous youth. They sent amongst us a number of female dancers, who, by the allurements of the most indecent attitudes, and most wanton theatrical exhibitions, succeeded but too effectually in loosening and corrupting the moral feelings of the people; and, indeed, if common report might be relied upon, the indecency of those appearances far out-shamed any thing of a similar nature that had ever been exhibited—he would not say, on any Christian theatre, but even upon the more licentious theatres of Athens and of Rome. If their lordships did but seriously attend to the sad consequences that must result from the exhibition of such spectacles before the eyes of their wives and daughters, while they also felt that it was now in their power to apply the remedy, they would doubtless feel the necessity of arresting *in limine*, not on the progress of such scandalous immorality, but also of pre-

venting it for the future; and indeed, unless an immediate stop were put to it, the inevitable consequence must be, that the malignant influence of such contaminating example must finally corrupt both sexes, and their lordships time would henceforward be wholly engrossed by cases of divorce. Twenty years had now elapsed since he had made a fruitless effort to check the growth of divorces. In that House he had indeed been successful; his endeavours, however, had been frustrated in another quarter. But the evil had since increased to such an alarming pitch, that, notwithstanding the influence of the learned lord who presided over that House, and in spite of the truly meritorious exertions of another learned lord (*Kenyon*) to check the growth of this particular species of immorality, its progress and corrupting influence appeared to be undiminished. Such, therefore, was his conviction of the necessity of applying some effectual remedy to this evil, that, should no noble or learned lord undertake the task, however unequal he should prove to its performance, he would assuredly take the first opportunity of moving, “That an humble address be presented to his majesty, praying that his majesty would be graciously pleased to prohibit the exhibition of those indecent spectacles, and to order those who performed in them to be sent out of the country.”

Mr. Dallas then appeared as counsel for Mr. Esten, and stated the case. Evidence was called to prove the marriage, the adultery, &c. and the reluctance with which Mr. Esten had subscribed the articles of separation; and his letters were produced to prove his intention of reuniting himself to his wife on his return from St. Domingo, previous to his knowledge of her misconduct. The House being resumed,

The *Lord Chancellor* said, that before they went into the committee, a noble lord had expressed himself in strong language against the present case, but, from the evidence which had since appeared, in terms not of too strong disapprobation. The articles of separation formed an insuperable bar to any divorce, and the circumstances of collusion which appeared in the case, rendered it the duty of the House to reject the application. On the motion for the second reading of the bill, therefore, he moved their lordships that it be rejected.

The bill was accordingly thrown out.

The *Lord Chancellor* again rose and said, that he was glad a noble lord had expressed his intention to bring forward some measure to prevent the frequency of applications for divorce, and he hoped he would persevere in his design. He hoped, too, that what a right reverend prelate had said would have its weight. Something certainly was necessary to be done by their lordships, as guardians of the public manners, to check the number of cases in which they were called upon to give their sanction to divorces. It was well known that divorce bills were now considered as little more than mere matters of form. It was notorious, that cases occurred in which the grossest collusion existed between parties to procure these bills; and though this collusion was flagrant to the world, their lordships, from the proof being perhaps, from the way the case was managed, unattainable, were compelled not to see what was so palpable out of the House. This gross and scandalous abuse required to be remedied. Though some more extensive measure might perhaps be necessary to go to the root of the evil, something might be done by their lordships in the way of regulation. It was a difficult matter to specify, with any degree of accuracy, in a legislative measure, how such a body as their lordships should act in every particular case of the kind that came before them; but there were some general rules which might precede the consideration of every case, and with which parties coming before them might be obliged to comply. He should suggest, therefore, in the first place, that every party presenting a petition to their lordships for a divorce, should be required to lay on the table, at the same time, a copy of the proceedings in the other courts, in order that it might be known how the cause had been conducted, and whether there were any circumstances of collusion. It might likewise be proper to call upon the party presenting a petition, to make oath to the truth of the facts set forth in it. If a man was acting fairly and honestly, it could be no hardship to call upon him to prove the truth of the assertion by an oath; and the House would be authorized to refuse the bill, unless the condition which they required was observed. Though he was not at present prepared to say what effect articles of separation ought to have in an application for divorce, it certainly was proper that their lordships should know,

and be able to weigh, the importance they would attach to the circumstance of the adultery being committed in a state of separation or of cohabitation. He would suggest, therefore, that parties should be called upon to state this point distinctly in the petition. He intended to reduce his suggestions into the form of resolutions, which should be laid on the table, and on some future day taken into consideration.

Proceedings in the Lords against the Printer and Proprietor of the Morning Chronicle, for a Breach of Privilege.

March 21. Lord Minto rose to make a complaint of a paragraph which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* of the 19th of March, highly reflecting upon the honour of this House. The said paragraph was read by the clerk, as follows:

"The House of Lords must now be admitted to be highly important as a political assembly, notwithstanding it has of late appeared to be nothing more than a chamber where the minister's edicts are registered for form's sake. Some of their lordships are determined to vindicate their importance. It is there that the dresses of the Opera dancers are regulated! One of the Roman Emperors recommended to the senate, when they were good for nothing else, to discuss what was the best sauce for a turbot. To regulate the length of a petticoat is a much more genteel employment."

Then William Probat was called in and sworn, and the said paper being shown to him, he acquainted the House that he bought the said paper at the house of John Lambert and James Perry, No. 5, Exeter Street, Strand.

Resolved, "That the said paper is a gross and scandalous libel upon this House, and in breach of the privileges thereof."

Ordered, "That the gentleman usher of the Black Rod, attending this House, do forthwith attach the bodies of the said John Lambert and James Perry, and bring them in safe custody to the bar of this House to-morrow, to answer for their offence."

March 22. The gentleman usher of the Black Rod informed the House that John Lambert and James Perry had surrendered themselves, and were now in his custody. Being called to the bar, the proceedings of the House regarding

them were read by the clerk. They were severally asked what they had to say in their defence. Mr. Lambert expressed his sorrow that he had unintentionally inserted the paragraph that had offended the House. Mr. Perry said, he was sensible that it was no justification of a gross and scandalous libel, that the article published in a newspaper was inserted without the knowledge of the proprietor; but as it was of the essence of a breach of privilege, that evil intention should be proved, when he declared his utter ignorance of the paragraph until complaint was justly made of it, he trusted he might hope for that clemency which was the characteristic of the dignified and moral justice of their lordships.—They were then directed to withdraw.

Lord *Minto* then said, that the subject on which he rose was one that must strike all their lordships with the same horror which he felt. The paragraph complained of was an attempt to wound the constitution, by destroying the dignity of that House. It was an attempt by squibs and jests to render the House ridiculous, to represent it as useless, and to strike at its very existence. Although their lordships might pass over attacks upon them as individuals, they could not allow the paragraph now under consideration to pass unnoticed. It was not a question upon which they should permit their humanity or liberality to interfere. They were trustees for the public; and as such, they were called upon to act. The offence of the prisoners was not confined to this particular paragraph. Upon taking a review of the conduct of the *Morning Chronicle*, he found it had invariably praised the enemies of the country. He then moved “That John Lambert and James Perry having presumed to print and publish a libel on this House, in the *Morning Chronicle* of Monday, March 19, 1798, are guilty of a high breach of the privileges of this House.—That the said John Lambert and James Perry do, for their said offence, pay a fine to his majesty of 50 pounds each, and that they be committed prisoners to Newgate for the space of three months, and until they pay the said fine.”

The Earl of *Derby* considered the punishment as too severe. Mr. Lambert, the printer, had declared that he had unintentionally inserted the paragraph, and Mr. Perry, that he was entirely ignorant of it. He said, he knew Mr. Perry

well. He had always heard him, in all companies and at all times, express the utmost reverence for the constitution; and he was sure he never employed his pen or his paper to undermine either its civil or religious establishments. The *Morning Chronicle* was distinguished by its regard to the decencies of private life, by its disdain of all scandal on individuals, and those licentious personalities by which the peace of families was disturbed. He thought that a more lenient correction for this single offence would be more becoming the dignity of that House; and should move to leave out “three months,” and insert “one month.”

The Duke of *Bedford* joined the earl of *Derby* in thinking the resolution too severe. He said, he also was personally acquainted with Mr. Perry, and had ever found him inviolably attached to the genuine principles of the British constitution. The noble duke bore testimony to the decorum with which the *Morning Chronicle* was uniformly conducted. It was the constant, zealous, and active enemy to the violation of rational freedom, wherever the outrage might be committed. Accordingly, throughout the whole of the French revolution, Mr. Perry's language had been discriminate, and his conduct uniform. He had applauded the first reforms, by which the condition of the people of France was to be improved; he had constantly spoken with horror of the massacres and violation of all principle, which had so frequently disgraced its progress; and in the very paper in which the offensive paragraph was inserted, the most marked indignation was expressed at the unprovoked aggression of the French on the people of Switzerland. The duke concluded, after ordering the precedents of the commitment of Mr. Woodfall in 1770, and of George Edmonds in 1770, to be read (in both of which the punishment was one month's imprisonment, and a fine of 100*l.*), with supporting the amendment.

Lord *Sydney* said, the *Morning Chronicle* was a scandalous paper, which he would not suffer to come into his house.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* said, that the matter was in his mind too trivial for their lordships' notice. It was a paragraph of mere levity, and with some wit. He did not know Mr. Perry personally, but he had ever read his paper with satisfaction.

Lord *Grenville* vindicated the moderation of the House on the present occasion.

The question was put, whether three months shall stand part of the said motion: Contents, 69; Not-Contents, 11. The House then ordered Mr. Perry and Mr. Lambert to be committed accordingly.

Debate on the Duke of Bedford's Motion for an Address to his Majesty to Change his Ministers.] The order of the day being read,

The Duke of *Bedford* rose, and spoke as follows:—My Lords; It will not require much detail of facts, or a great deal of argument, to prove that, in the career which they have pursued, the present ministers have been uniformly supported by your implicit confidence, and wholly uncontrolled by your interference. If, then, I shall be able to show that, notwithstanding all the confidence they have enjoyed, and all the means with which they have been entrusted, much, if not the whole of that calamitous state to which this country is reduced, is owing to the misconduct, and the incapacity of our rulers, your lordships will feel yourselves compelled to agree with me, that no hopes can be entertained that we can be rescued from our difficulties, by the continuance of any efforts that they may attempt, and will feel yourselves called upon to vote for the motion I shall have the honour to submit to you. It will not be impertinent again to remind you, that prior to the commencement of the war, ministers were charged by those who were friendly to peace, with pursuing that line of conduct, which infallibly led to hostilities, and that the war was the natural consequence of the policy upon which ministers had long acted. My object now is to show that the only chance of safety is in the removal of the men to whom they are to be ascribed.—With whatever sentiments ministers may have been supposed to contemplate the prospect of a war, and whatever means they may have employed to prevent it, yet it will be recollected that the declaration of war on the part of the French, excited their most lively joy. They, however, who thought that greater exertions ought to have been made to prevent a rupture with France, left no effort untried to put an end to the evils in which we had been involved. Remonstrances were made against the measures which ministers pursued. To these remonstrances no answers were given. At the end of five years of war let me call the attention of the House to the situation

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in which we stood at the commencement of the contest, and that which we now hold. The situation of the country at this time was not alone that of being deserted by every ally, and maintaining the contest singly; but that of being reduced to a state of defence, without any prospect of success, or a hope of a termination to the war. The country was also reduced in finance, and obliged to pay interest for a debt of about 160 millions. This was the sum which it was thought necessary to expend for the destruction of Jacobinism; and, after all, the Jacobin rulers existed in France, and possessed more powers than ever they did. Notwithstanding this debt, a fresh sum was to be borrowed, and an additional charge of nine millions and an half annually was to be laid on the country; a sum greater than what the whole interest of the debt amounted to at the end of the American war. Could any person think of that minister who thus charged the country with more than all his predecessors had done, without feeling that some other ought to be put in his place? If it was contended that ministers were free from any blame, it surely could not be denied that every thing of which they had the management was miserably conducted. We began the war in conjunction with the greatest confederacy ever known in Europe, and we are now without a single ally but Portugal. What hope of success have we in protracted war? What prospect have we of its termination? The permanent debt of the nation has been doubled in the short space of five years. Can you think, then, that no blame can attach to the men who have squandered so profusely the resources of the nation without fruit or advantage?—While we contemplate from without a situation of affairs so afflicting, there is nothing in our internal state to afford us a consolation. While our burthens have increased our privileges have been abridged. We are now living under laws which are hostile to the best principles which our ancestors laboured to establish. But there is another topic which this review suggests, on which I know not how to speak. Consider the situation of Ireland at the present moment. It has been said that you ought not to interfere in the affairs of Ireland. But do not the ministers of this country interfere in the affairs of Ireland? Do they not, by the system which they pursue, alienate from you the affections of the sister kingdom. My

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lords, were I to enter into a detail of the atrocities which have been committed in Ireland, the picture would appal the stoutest heart. It could be proved that the most shocking cruelties have been perpetrated; but what could be expected if men, kept in strict discipline, were all at once allowed to give loose to their fury and their passions.

Ministers have been often warned of the mischiefs with which their measures were pregnant. They have laughed at all advice, and have persevered in their own system with an obstinacy equalled only by the calamities which it has produced. But it may be said their intention was good. Admitting that this were the case, how has it happened that every act they have performed has tended not to raise and to exalt, but to disgrace, and to degrade the country. Perhaps it may be contended, that they are the only men qualified for the stations they occupy. They may arrogantly maintain that they are the only men whose loyalty and integrity are beyond doubt. I will be bold to assert, however, that in this and the other House of parliament there is a sufficient number of men of great talents, fair character, and tried loyalty, to form a cabinet capable of conducting the affairs of the country with ability and success. We have said, and still maintain, that a reform in parliament is necessary to infuse new vigour into the constitution, to control the over-grown influence of the crown, to check the power of the aristocracy, to check that enormous influence which the minister has derived by the creation of peers, when peers are sent into this House by dozens.—After the severe punishment which has this night been inflicted upon the proprietor and printer of a newspaper, it may not be unfair to complain of the foul calumnies which are heaped upon me and my friends by the underlings of government. The basest aspersions are lavished upon all who venture to dissent from the measures of ministers. We have been charged with being hostile to the constitution. It may be said that we ought not to regard these calumnies, and ought to persevere in doing our duty. It becomes a question, however, what is our duty? Such despicable calumnies certainly ought to be treated with contempt. If, however, instead of resisting the encroachments of the minister, our attendance in parliament has no other effect but to sanction his

abuses, and teach the people to believe that they have no alternative but to choose between the present ministers and those with whom I act, I should consider that attendance as not only nugatory but mischievous. If such, however, be the alternative which ministers choose to hold out, it becomes our duty to prove that the calumny is ill-founded. By withdrawing the attention of the country from us, and fixing it upon ministers, we are desirous that they should reflect that no evil can be greater than the continuance of the present ministers in office. Then they will find men able to conduct their affairs; men fitted to conciliate Ireland, and to obtain peace. When we hold a reform in parliament to be necessary, we know that this measure is unfavourably received by the majority. We are convinced, however, that without this the country can never be placed upon a good footing. We stand pledged to take no share in any administration, in which this is not a leading object. In saying this, however, I am ready to confess that there are some measures which appear to me to be more immediately necessary than parliamentary reform—a peace with France, the conciliation of Ireland with the question of Catholic emancipation, and parliamentary reform in that country. With these sentiments I declare, that I will never make one of any administration with which parliamentary reform is not a leading object. This I say merely in answer to the charge of being a candidate for office, for I should be ashamed to talk of myself as fit for any office in any other view. Upon this subject I likewise declare, that the specific plan of parliamentary reform proposed last year in another place (by Mr. Grey) has my concurrence. But the calumniators to whom I have alluded, have also dared to insinuate that I am not averse to the success of the French in their designs against this country. Much as I despise the authors of these attacks I think it necessary to repel calumnies so gross. I cannot help considering it as a disadvantage to this country to hold out to the enemy that on landing here they would find supporters. Yet such are the falsehoods which these calumniators assert; such are the means by which they encourage the French to make the attempt. After they have by their own lies induced the enemy to judge unfavourably of the temper of the people here, they turn round and ascribe to us those impressions of the

enemy which they have occasioned. But in case of invasion, who would be the men from whom the Directory might flatter themselves with assistance? Would it not be from those mean sycophants of power who readily and servilely follow every change, who have alternately been the creatures of every one in authority, and whose loyalty is,

—“the blind instinct that crouches to the rod, And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.”

Every man in the country must know that if the French were to succeed, we should be the most degraded and absolute slaves that ever existed. No man can believe that those who oppose administration could for a moment abet the designs of an invading enemy. What, then, can we think of ministers, when we see them encouraging these base calumnies? What shall we think, when we see them holding out a person whom no man can suspect of disloyalty to his sovereign, or treachery to his country, as unfit to be trusted with arms for their defence. For my own part, though I never will contribute to preserve ministers in office, I will exert every effort in repelling invasion from our coasts. I shall wait only my sovereign's command to take arms to defend my country, anxious to be placed in the foremost ranks, in the post of danger, and in the hottest of the battle. Though I conceive there can be no more decided enemy to his king and country than the present ministers, I should suspend all difference of opinion till the hostile attack was repelled. If I returned safe, I should return with the same detestation of his conduct, and vow eternal enmity to his system. If ever I contract any alliance with any administration upon any other basis but that which I have described; or join any set of men upon public principles different from those I have professed—may the bitterest execrations of mankind be my portion, the just indignation of my country pursue me, and may my Creator pour down his curses on my apostate head!—The noble duke then moved,

“That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, most humbly to represent, that, from the commencement of the war, to the present moment, his majesty's ministers have had all the advantages that could be derived from the entire confidence and support of parliament; that this confidence and support have given them the unlimited command and disposal of the power and revenue of these king-

doms:—that profusely furnished with means to obtain success, the councils which have had the direction of this power, and the application of these resources, have been attended with no effect but to exalt France to her present formidable greatness, and in the same proportion to impair the relative situation of Great Britain, to expose her, with reduced strength and diminished resources, to all those dangers which it was alleged could be averted only by an early and successful combination to resist the principles, as well as the power, of the French government; and after an unavailing expense of blood and treasure, to compel his majesty's ministers to open a negotiation for peace by a total dereliction of all the principles on which the war was said to be unavoidable, and by submitting to abandon those safeguards and defences which, in the early periods of hostilities, were insisted on as absolutely indispensable to the security of these kingdoms.

“That without looking back to the causes of war, or inquiring whether it might, or might not, have been avoided, charges which may hereafter be brought against those persons who originally advised his majesty not to acknowledge the Republic of France, nor to listen to any terms of accommodation, we think it our duty humbly to lay before his majesty the situation in which we are now placed.

“We are awed by the result of the war itself, and astonished at the conclusion drawn from it by his majesty's ministers, who with all the means of vigorous attack have reduced us to a state of precarious defence, yet still have the confidence to assert, that in the same councils, which have proved so incompetent in prosperity to direct with advantage the affairs of the nation, the best means are to be found of relief and security in our present difficulty and distress, and that we are still to look to them alone for the attainment of a safe and honourable peace.

“That this House and every member of it, is ready to provide for a vigorous defence of the country, and will not shrink from any personal difficulty or danger that may attend the performance of this duty—that whatever differences may exist with regard to the principles and policy of our internal government, we are determined and unanimous in our resolution to resist all foreign interference. But instructed as we are by a long series of events, and corrected by experience, we

are bound by our duty, and compelled by necessity, to submit to his majesty our humble opinion, that the situation of the country is too critical, and the dangers that surround it are too serious to admit of any farther trial of the same councils which have constantly failed, or of the same persons for whose continuance in office, notwithstanding the heavy and unanswered charges which have been brought against them, even themselves have nothing to plead but a feeble unavailing rectitude of intention, constantly overpowered by the superior policy and vigour of the enemy, or a pretended apprehension equally false and malignant of the designs and principles of those whom his majesty might appoint to succeed them in the administration of public affairs: as if in the present cabinet were to be found the only efficient persons whose loyalty and attachment to the constitution were free from all suspicion and doubt.

"That, lamenting as we do, the failure of the late negotiations for peace, we beseech his majesty seriously to reflect, whether, when conducted by his present ministers, there could be any reasonable hope of their success. We have not forgotten their haughty and supercilious rejection of all offers of accommodation previous to the commencement of hostilities, and we too well remember the terms of inveterate and irreconcilable enmity on which the contest was placed at the outset, and on which it has ever since been conducted to hope for any conciliatory disposition between the enemy and the original advisers of the war—we cannot be surprised that any overture which may now be made by his majesty's ministers, after having wilfully neglected or insolently refused every favourable opportunity of negotiation, should be received as an acknowledgment of weakness and distress, rather than as a proof of a sincere disposition to peace.

"Further to represent to his majesty, that the situation of the country is in all respects pregnant with dangers unknown at any former period, our domestic distress is great and is hourly increasing; the principles of our free constitution have been violated, and some of the most essential securities of our liberties destroyed; the connexion with our sister kingdom is threatened with dissolution, and all the foundations of our importance and power in Europe are rendered preca-

rious and uncertain. To extricate us from such difficulties requires much fortitude and wisdom; for these qualities we cannot look to his majesty's present advisers; under them we cannot hope for a successful prosecution of the war, still less for the conclusion of a secure and equitable peace.

"We, therefore, submit this our humble representation to his majesty, trusting that his majesty will see, as we do, the urgent and indispensable necessity of employing other persons, and of adopting other councils."

The motion having been from the wool-sack,

Lord *Boringdon* said, that the proposition brought forward by the noble duke was of a most plain and simple nature, at the same time that he thought it of the utmost importance, for upon their lordships rejection or adoption of it depended the independence of the country, and the existence of the constitution. He must therefore enter his protest against the adoption of a measure which appeared pregnant with such serious calamity. It might not be unworthy of remark, that the noble duke throughout his observations upon the present situation of this country, had wholly abstained from speaking of it as with respect to the other powers of Europe; he had left their lordships wholly in the dark as to the state of their prosperity and vigour; he had made no comparison between them and us, and might therefore be fairly considered as having given the House a very incomplete and inadequate idea of the real situation of this country, estimated as that situation always had been, and always in reason must be, by the consideration of its relation to the other powers of Europe. It was not to be supposed that the omission was altogether the effect of inadvertence. It was impossible for the House to be ignorant that such a disquisition must have had the infallible effect of raising in their minds an honest pride at the superiority of our own situation, and at the dignified station which we held in the eyes of all those who looked with horror to the dominion of foreign tyranny; and to whom religion, liberty, and law were still objects of veneration and love. Had the noble duke stated the situation of the Batavian republic, of the Spanish monarchy, or of the neutral maritime powers, or had he talked of the tranquillity of Italy or Switzerland, or had he expatiated on the hap-

pineness enjoyed even in the French republic, it was impossible for him not to have known, that adverting to such topics would have had the effect of raising the general opinion in which the House and the public held those ministers, who, amid such a general wreck of empires, had by their talents been able to preserve to this state a degree of vigour and prosperity, which in no former period had ever been exceeded. If such a sum as 164 millions had been added to the public debt, together with all those other calamities which had been so eloquently, and he might add so carefully, enumerated by the noble duke, during a period of general tranquillity, in such case he should have considered the ministers under whose rule it had happened, not only weak and wicked, but the system pursued by them radically bad; but the contrary was the fact; that debt, and those calamities, light as they were when balanced with those experienced by other countries, had been the inevitable consequences of a war which had desolated the rest of Europe. The noble duke had professed his intention of avoiding the consideration of the object of the war, yet he could not forbear insinuating that we were the aggressors. But he was persuaded, whoever would refer to Mr. Harper's American pamphlet, would be fully convinced of the injustice of the assertion. The noble duke, though he had not positively made the assertion, yet had pretty clearly insinuated, that the restoration of monarchy in France was the object which England had in the war. This idea had never been brought forward in that House without meeting with an instant contradiction, and he trusted it never would be; it was an object no less contradictory to the general and implied law of nations, than it was abhorrent from the principles and feelings of the British nation. He would not deny that the restoration of monarchy in France might at one time have been considered as a means of peace, though he would deny that it had ever been considered as the end of war. In considering the restoration of monarchy in France, as a possible means of peace, and in taking advantage of the power of the royalist party, we had acted according to just and sound policy at the time, and according to the general practice of civilized nations at war. Look to almost all the wars we had seen in Europe during the course of the present century. Had

not almost in every one of them the principle of a foreign nation at war taking advantage of opposite opinions and parties been acted upon and acknowledged? Did Louis 14th on the one hand, and England and Austria on the other, take no pains to influence the minds of the Spaniards, and to secure their co-operation in the war which is commonly called the succession war? Did not the same principle occur again as with regard to the powers which respectively supported the interests of Charles 7th and Francis 1st as emperor of Germany? Were the repeated succours afforded by France to James 2d and his successors against this country ever considered as contrary to the law of nations? Be, however, all this as it might, he had very high authority for saying that the restoration of monarchy in France was not the object which England had in the war; he alluded to a no less authority than Tallien, who at the time that he enjoyed the highest consideration in France, and when he was actually invested with an important commission in that country, addressed a public paper to the French nation, telling them, that it was against France, and not against their republic that England was fighting, and that if France was to declare for a monarchy to-morrow, England would support the republic. This was plain and intelligible language, and could be supposed to mean nothing more or less than that it is not for or against this or that form of government in France that England will fight, but that it is against her gigantic and ambitious projects (under whatever form of government they may be attempted) that England ever will oppose herself. He trusted M. Tallien was right, and that England would ever resist to the utmost of her power, that inordinate system of dominion which had every where established itself on the nefarious and almost undisguised abandonment of every principle which had hitherto been supposed to bind the actions of states or individuals. With respect to the situation of Ireland, he was sorry it had been adverted to, without that strict delicacy which the subject demanded. Did the noble duke really believe that any system of conciliation would tranquillize Ireland? Could it produce such an effect in men, who had avowed their determination to hear of nothing but what came from themselves? No man could lay his hand on his heart and say, that any conciliation to such men would be attended with success.

The noble duke had used the strong expression of the numberless atrocities committed by the military in Ireland. For his part, he was much surprised at the assent with which accounts of such atrocities were received in this country. A noble earl (the earl of Moira), who was not in his place, had, a few months ago, favoured their lordships with a long speech upon this subject. The House must have been then aware how assiduous the noble earl must have been in collecting the instances which he at that time brought forward; but notwithstanding his assiduity, it had since turned out that he had been extremely mistaken in some of his principal cases. With regard to conciliation itself, nobody could be more friendly to it than he was, but, he thought, that if the Irish legislature were now to adopt the two measures which were commonly comprehended under the term conciliation, no possible good could result from it.—After three months notice the noble duke had proposed to the House to address his majesty to remove from his councils those who at present presided over them. In doing this, he called upon their lordships to obliterate from their memories the recollection of all the former services of those ministers; to forget that to them this country was indebted for the advantageous commercial treaty with France, in 1788; that it was to them we owed the improvements which the jurisprudence of the country had derived from the powers given to juries, and from the decision of the question respecting the abatement of impeachments; that to their exertions and abilities we were indebted for the introduction of that admirable system of finance which had raised the public funds, previous to the year 1793, to the extraordinary pitch at which they had arrived: a system which, by its operation since that period, had preserved the national independence of the country, strengthened its commerce, and secured its freedom. This was not all: the noble duke had called upon the House to do this, at a period when the suspension of the powers of government, even for a week, must be of the most serious consequences—at a time when a conspiracy existed against all the old governments of the earth—at a time when the power and the animosity of the enemy were equally increased; when common spoils would not satisfy her; when she was actually at our gates, when her language was clear and decided

“Actum, inquit, nihil est, nisi Pæno milite portas

Frangimus, est mediâ vexillum pono Suburrâ.”

For himself, he never entertained the idea that the existence of the British constitution depended on any one man, or on any particular set of men; but this he did believe, that under the present circumstances, the existence of that constitution would be highly endangered by the committal of the executive government to men, whose ideas of parliamentary reform, and whose supposed connexion with affiliated societies, must necessarily have the effect of weakening our means of national defence, and of creating and inciting speculation and disunion throughout every part of the kingdom.—Their lordships, he said, were wholly unacquainted with the system on which this new government would act. Several of the persons most likely to compose it had virtually declared the House of Commons to be no longer the representatives of the people. Would they condescend to resume their seats in that assembly; and would the first acts of their government be proposed to the consideration of parliament, or ushered into the world through any other channel? In short, their lordships were wholly ignorant what might be their plans and intentions; they knew not how far in their desire of obtaining a nominal peace with France, they might intend to humble this country at the feet of that power; they knew not how far they might wish to extend the reformation of parliament (since of the ninety-five who voted for that measure last year, it was notorious that many of them differed most materially from each other), and they knew not (but here indeed, he observed, the ignorance was common to the other side of the House also), how far they might be carried beyond their intentions in the prosecution of this favourite object of radical reform.

Lord *Holland* said:—My lords; If it were possible for me to be surprised at any thing that comes from those noble lords who espouse the cause of his majesty's ministers, I must be astonished at some of the assertions of my noble friend who spoke last. That the country is in a state of unprecedented distress, is a proposition which I thought till this night, no man could have been hardy enough to deny. To me it appears that our calamities are so great, that I am astonished how any one can be thoughtless or sanguine enough to think, that there is the

smallest hope of a successful issue, particularly under the administration of those whose rashness first brought the nation into the war, and whose impotence and incapacity have rendered that war more than any other shameful and disastrous. The noble lord, though he boasts of the dignified state of this country as compared with others in Europe, admits, nevertheless, that the time is pregnant with danger. If, then, we do stand in that perilous situation; if we are, as the noble lord says, threatened by a conspiracy; if the enemy is at our gates; are we not in a situation which requires the assistance of men of talents, fortitude, and vigour; and which calls upon this House to withdraw their support from ministers, who have exhibited a total want of capacity and vigour? It may seem strange, my lords, that I, who must be conscious of my own inexperience and deficiency, should thus impeach the understandings of men who are allowed to have among them much talents. That they have talents I readily admit; but that those talents are fitted for the present times, I take the liberty to deny;

“Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis,
Tempus eget.”

Lofty declamation without energy; boastful eloquence without vigour; cunning without wisdom; feeble efforts or temporising expedients, will never rescue this country from the dangers which press upon it from all parts.—On the origin of the war, I shall offer a few remarks, since they have been touched upon by the noble baron who spoke last. The noble lord has denied that the restoration of monarchy in France was the primary object of the war, and has given the authority of Tallien, who, in a public paper, avowed that it was not the republic, but France, against which England waged war. This, my lords, was at one time true, and at another false, just as it happened to suit the occasional views of ministers. Your lordships know what were the doctrines which were laid down by a celebrated gentleman, now deceased, whose talents I admired, whose virtues I revered, and whose memory I respect. I mean Mr. Burke. That great man maintained that, without the restoration of a monarchy of some form or other in France, there was no security for Europe. My lords, it is to the confusion of those two doctrines that we are to attribute all the errors and all the calamities of the war; for while Mr.

Burke urged the necessity of overturning the republic, ministers thought that a proper pretext and a fit opportunity to attack France; and thus unhappily contrived to enlist every man in France, whether republican or loyalist, against them, and to inflame them against this country. By this confusion of principle, by the duplicity of their conduct, and by the obvious treachery of their views, did the allies enlist not only the interests, but the natural vanity of France against them; so that every individual in that country felt it to be his principle and his duty to resist an infamous combination of princes, who commenced the war by swindling, and ended it in blunders and disgrace. With views such as these the war commenced; England being at that time in a condition of unexampled prosperity. That all the objects which government had in view, whether those so ably enforced by Mr. Burke on one hand, or the indefinite views of the minister on the other, have completely failed, cannot be denied; neither can it be overlooked that France, at the commencement of the contest, had every imaginable difficulty to encounter. Have I not then, a right to say that this country, flourishing as it was, found it impossible to check the progress of France, crippled and depressed; and is it not fair to presume, that such miscarriages, so uniformly happening to every plan of the ministers, can only be owing to their total want of talents and capacity as statesmen? Am I not justified in saying, that they have neither talents, vigour, nor capacity, and ought to be dismissed in order to give place to men better qualified to govern the country? “But,” says a noble lord, “this would be ingratitude: this would be to dismiss men who have rendered great services to the country, and raised its finances to a state of unprecedented affluence and prosperity.” But, shall such a paltry evasion be deemed a justification of their having destroyed the finances of the country? Let ministers restore the finances even to the situation in which they stood at the period previous to their boasted services! Not only have they undone what they themselves did, but all that had been done before their time. Are we to allow this in justification of their misconduct? Are we, out of gratitude for a small benefit supposed to be done in time of peace, to overlook the most unjustifiable misconduct of ministers, and devote the country to them and ruin in time of war?

My lords, it is impossible but you must remember that, at the beginning of every session, the minister has said to parliament, "There is your expenses for this year:" and that invariably the sum has been doubled before the end of the session. This is called "an unforeseen accident." Subsidies were unexpectedly found to be necessary, and the ordinary mode of supply was departed from. Those were as unlucky as all other parts of the minister's politics; and here, too, they plead error. But can they say they were not cautioned against those subsidies? Were there not men, eminent for virtue and talents, who predicted at the time, that the subsidized powers would desert the alliance, and that the resources of the nation would be squandered in vain? Prussia, Austria, and Sardinia were subsidized to carry on the war. Holland did not desire our interference, and all these powers carried on the war merely because this country persuaded them to carry it on. But happy would it have been for this country, if ministers, instead of subsidizing those powers to carry on the war, had allowed, or even subsidized them to make peace. When Sardinia, in return for our subsidy, made a peace with France, it was "an unforeseen accident." Every failure of the ministers was "an unforeseen accident." Indeed, they were the most unfortunate ministers in the multiplicity of their unforeseen accidents that ever existed. A noble marquis (Lansdowne), once said, that the allies, by their conduct, would establish a military republic in the heart of Europe. And so it turned out. Was that an unforeseen accident? No; not unforeseen. Admitting that it could be termed unfortunate, and that all the misconduct of the war could be considered as no worse than unfortunate, it does not alter the grounds of my noble friend's motion; for if the measures of any particular set of men happen to be unfortunate, it is good and sufficient grounds for dismissing them, since very good or very bad fortune have a very impressive effect on the minds of men.

My lords, I shall now trouble you with a few observations on the very important subject of Ireland. A noble lord, in answer to my noble friend's proposal for conciliation, has asked if any one will put his hand to his heart, and say that conciliation would produce the effect of tranquillizing that country? I ask, will any one put his hand to his heart, and say that coercion will produce it? Can any one

point out a single instance of such an effect having been produced by such means in such circumstances? Has the war with France, or has that with America, given reason to put any confidence in coercion? My lords, I can put my hand to my heart, and say, that I am persuaded his majesty's present ministers cannot tranquillize that country even by conciliation. How can they conciliate whose concessions are always known to be the concessions of weakness and of fear; who refuse to supplication what they grant to menace; who not only in the case of France, but even in that of the mutinies at Portsmouth and the Nore, and of the grants to Ireland, never conceded that which they had not before refused; and who never granted, even to the Irish (the most generous people upon earth) any thing without struggle and resistance? And thus, my lords, the rulers of France argue of our ministers; and hence arises their reluctance to make peace till they can exact from the fear and feebleness of administration that which they would despair of obtaining from any other set of men. When they observe in the political tactics here the nature of our minister, and his jealousy of the people, they naturally say, why does he ask for peace? Is it for the sake of peace in its true spirit? No such thing. Is it because he thinks peace wise, or prudent, or just? No such thing; but because he finds that the people are adverse to the war, and demand a peace with a clamour which can only be appeased by holding out the pretext of negotiation. And, speculating in this manner on the conduct of ministers, the Directory withhold that peace, which, if any other men were our rulers, they would feel it to be their interest to grant. As to our negotiations, the first proposal made by ministers was, when Jourdan was at the head of a victorious army; but that ended because the restoration of Belgium was made a *sine quâ non*. In this case, the weakness of ministers appeared; for they ought to have duly considered, first, the probability of regaining that country; and next, whether the sum of money that might be expended in regaining it would not be more than Belgium in the hands of Austria would be worth to us. It is well known that at Vienna Belgium was looked upon as an incumbrance; to urge Austria to fight for it, therefore, and to pay a subsidy for that purpose, was actual insanity. To pay subsidies for the purpose of main-

taining Belgium as a *sine quâ non*, is a proof either of such incapacity, or such insincerity, as ought not to be pardoned. The British minister, who was so dignified that he would hold no intercourse with the murderers of the king of France, was found sending a plenipotentiary over to crouch to one of the worst of those very murderers; and the enemy were very sagaciously informed from thence that, by waiting longer, they would have more ample concessions; for the *malus animus* is no more dead among the rulers of France, than among our ministers.

Ministers say that they stay in office to keep out others who would be worse than themselves. This I conceive to be extremely arrogant; for is it not insulting the nation at large to suggest that there are in it only two sets of men fit for the office? For my part, my lords, I am sure there are many, and I pledge myself to support any set of men who will make the attainment of peace their object. As for reform, I pledge myself to pursue it, as necessary to prevent the same system from taking place here, which produced the French revolution, as well as that in America. To dismiss ministers is therefore necessary; and I for my part will support in or out of this House such ministers supplying their place as will take measures to conciliate Ireland. The system of coercion ought to be given up, that of conciliation adopted with regard to Ireland. By conciliation I mean a total change of measures, and a full concession to every just demand. But the concession of ministers has been always ill timed, or marked with weakness.

The Marquis of *Downshire* said, he could lay his hand upon his heart and declare, that, in his opinion, conciliation, as explained by the noble duke and others, could never save Ireland. If it was meant that the king of Great Britain should no longer be acknowledged in Ireland, and that that country should become a province of France, that indeed might be obtained by conciliation. He would declare farther, that it was the general wish of that country to stand or fall by this. But he was ashamed to say that there were persons in that country so base as to wish to see it made a province to France. He came to the House that day thinking it was impossible for any noble lord to introduce into this debate the subject of Ireland; after so plain and ample a statement as that which had

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been made upon that subject, not only in that House but also in Ireland by his majesty's ministers. Every syllable that a noble earl (*Moir*) had stated upon that measure had been contradicted by the statement of plain facts. It appeared that the doubts of that noble lord respecting the existence of a plot were fully answered; indeed, so imperfect was the noble lord's information, that there were then, even in his own house, people engaged in making arms. There were, indeed, two sets of people in Ireland; the one of them said they wanted the emancipation of the Catholics; the other said they wanted parliamentary reform—in which they were not sincere: they made use of these as pretexts to deceive the ignorant.—Much had been said that night upon the subject of coercion. He was not afraid of the effect of coercion, although he liked concession when well applied. And upon that subject he must observe, that ever since the present king ascended the throne, every concession had been made that could be made towards Ireland. She had a trade as free as could be safely made so. Every Catholic was as free as the safety of the state would admit. Were the Catholics to have an equal share in the government with the Protestants, the government and the country would be lost. He was sorry to say that coercion was absolutely necessary, to prevent the designs of the united Irishmen. He must farther observe that the united Irishmen, never would have gone the length they did, had they not received support from clubs and societies of this country; and he was sorry to say, that too many noblemen gave strength to these persons and these societies, by belonging to them; or if they did not belong to them, they gave them their countenance, which had in some respects the same effect. He was confident that all the enormous crimes, the menaces of assassination, and the murders that had been committed, were to be attributed to the doctrines which had been disseminated by the emissaries of the corresponding societies, and those who had affiliated themselves to France. The present motion had a tendency to damp the ardour of the people, and therefore he should give it his decided negative.

Lord *Romney* said, that in his mind there was not the slightest ground for the present motion, as ministers appeared to possess the public opinion as much at this

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moment as at any period of their administration. He thought they deserved the thanks of that House, as he believed they had the thanks of the public for their ability, their diligence, and the care they took of the interest of the state. He had never considered this as an unsuccessful war. In no spot upon the whole globe had we lost a single point. The enemy, notwithstanding all their gasconade, were blocked up in their own ports, and dared not attack us, even within a league of their own coasts. It was matter of indifference to him who were ministers, provided they did their duty; It was to the salvation of the country that he looked, and he declared that in the county of Kent the people were ready to submit to every measure of government; and he had no doubt that in case of an invasion they would prove themselves a great and powerful, because a free people. He did not think he should be a friend to his country, if he did not give the motion his decided disapprobation. He was so clearly convinced of this, that as soon as it was got rid of he would move, "That in a crisis in which all the interests of our country are at stake, we have seen, with peculiar satisfaction, that the zeal and public spirit of every rank of our fellow subjects has risen in proportion to the magnitude of the occasion; and that animated on our part by the same sentiments, we deem it our indispensable duty, instead of distracting the councils of our sovereign with proposals of change, to renew the declaration of our invariable adherence to the principles which have governed his majesty's councils, and in which his parliament has uniformly concurred, for the security of these kingdoms against foreign attack, and for the maintenance of our religion, laws, and constitution."

The Earl of *Darnley* objected to the motion, as no proof had been adduced of the various positions advanced by the noble duke in support of it, and also from a conviction that public confidence and opinion, as between the present administration and the noble duke's friends, was decidedly in favour of the former. He was much more inclined to blame them for want of foresight and readiness to engage in the war, than for any eagerness they had showed for that event. If ministers had insisted on the restoration of the Netherlands, they had only acted in conformity to the established policy of the country. Admitting that France was

capable of the relations of peace and amity, she had shown no inclination to enter into them in either of the negotiations commenced. Until such a disposition was apparent, it was absurd to attribute the continuance of the war to ministers. For these and other reasons, he was most decidedly adverse to the present motion.

The Marquis of *Lansdowne* said:—My lords; the situation in which we are, the question before us is, whether his majesty's present ministers, as they have proved themselves by their conduct, are capable or incapable of conducting the affairs of this country with advantage? In this critical moment, I know of nothing whereby to judge of men, but their actions. They have had many opportunities of showing their talents; they have had the purse of the nation entirely at their command, for nearly five years. It is easy to put every man upon the right road to come to his journey's end in forming an opinion upon ministers. We have only to examine what they promised and what they have done. In God's name, if they be proved to have acted as wise men ought to have acted, let them not only be free from censure, but let them have your praise. If, on the other hand, it should appear, they undertook what they knew they could not accomplish; if, from affluent circumstances, they have reduced you to poverty; if, from the highest credit, they have brought your finances to disrepute; then I say, he would be a wicked man who desired you not to address your sovereign to dismiss them from his councils. This question ought to be coolly and calmly decided, not by passion and prejudice. I remember what the course was during the American war. The passions were addressed; every man who attempted to address the judgments of men was cried down; and I saw afterwards all that false ardour abate, and reason resume her empire; but not until much mischief had been occasioned. I would to God that the dangers were not greater now from these passions and false argument, than they were at the time of the American war! But all the evils of that war were nothing when compared to the present. What has been the conduct of ministers generally speaking? Bold and unqualified assurances of success have been repeatedly given. Similar declarations of bold and decisive confidence were made

in the American war; yet every one of them were contradicted by the events that took place. With regard to allies, they said that your allies were such as would never quit you, but would carry you through every object they undertook for you. The coalition of the powers against France was represented as an irresistible force, far above that confederacy formed in the reign of queen Anne. In short, your allies were said to be superior to any idea of default.—What was said of the French finances? That the French were in a state of abject penury; that they were reduced to the last penny; in short, that your resources were unbounded while the French had not any. Compare these vaunting promises with the facts as they have since appeared. You were promised great success upon the continent in consequence of the wise measures of administration: you are now driven from the continent, so that you have not room to form a line there. Nothing can protect you from mischief upon the continent, but the total insignificance to which you are reduced. Tell me when there was a period till the present in the history of Europe, when Great Britain dared not show herself upon the continent. She is indeed blotted out of the map of Europe. You now have no ambassador to see or represent any thing with regard to the balance of power in Europe, which you were wont to adjust, which you have now lost, and lost, I fear to all eternity, by the mismanagement of your ministers.—But what is become of all the millions of paper which were to bear down the finances of France? These same millions of assignats they have got rid of at the expense, to their government, of only six millions sterling, and yet they have contrived to continue the war, although our ministers pronounced that to be impossible. Their paper is extinct instead of being extended. But what is our case in point of finance? We are driven to every desperate resource—driven to I know what expedient—somebody said something of swindling, this is something very near it. With regard to the subscriptions, I can only repeat what was better said by Mr. Burke, “it is one step towards the dissolution of all property.” Here we were going over all the country, making public and chartered bodies apply the property entrusted to them for certain uses, to the exigencies of government. The Bank of England is made to give, headlong, 200,000l.

without the advice of their counsel.—With regard to property, how is it possible you can conceive that protection to property is the object of this war? And here I cannot help saying that very dangerous doctrines are held forth concerning property, It has been said, in another place, that offices and places are held by a stronger tenure than any freehold. I will never suffer that doctrine to go unfuted. To consider offices and places under the crown of equal weight or superior to freehold property, is a doctrine of the most monstrous nature. Offices are commonly obtained by accident, intrigue, or court corruption, and should never be put on a footing with a freehold. Your lordships should be aware, that if you give up your property to these profligate principles, your liberty must soon follow; indeed, property can subsist without liberty, better than liberty can subsist without property.—I come now to consider of the folly of the system of our ministers, in endeavouring to extend our empire by conquest. That extension is pleasing to weak minds, because it is a necessary extension of patronage; but I have seen various instances of the folly of it in a national point of view. We have conquered islands and given them up. Corsica was ours at an immense expense, and resigned; and I wish ministers could have been persuaded to abandon their mad schemes of conquest in St. Domingo.—But how are you to defend yourselves against invasion? I own I have no very great fear of it in this country; but as to Ireland, true it is Hoche is no more, but I cannot help remembering how the case stood on a former occasion; nor can I help observing, that all about Limerick, which is an important post, is very defenceless. A few ships have been stationed at Cork, but I am afraid also of the state of the north-western coast. Is there a sufficient naval force in the Shannon, and off Bantry Bay? I am afraid also that the state of Ireland is not so good as some imagine it to be. I have every reason to believe that Ireland is at this moment held by military tenure. This very day I have received accounts from Ireland, stating, that the farmers in various parts are declining their tillage. What a scene of calamity does this open to our view! Here is the possibility at least of a famine in one part of the empire! But look at the thing on a larger scale. What is the British empire? It consists of Great Britain and Ireland, together

with its dependencies, which dependencies I conceive to be a considerable burthen in any but a commercial view. Even your India I have never been an admirer of, except for its wealth, which, by the way, may be more than equalled by the losses of life and corruption of morals which it occasions. What, then, is the situation of the kingdom? Ireland is held by military tenure, which is very expensive, very precarious, and very dangerous. Scotland is said to be quiet, although the state trials there hardly lead us to that conclusion. The time may soon come when Scotland must support England to carry on a war in Ireland. Why, my lords, if the country was made of gold, and men could spring up like mushrooms, you could not long continue upon this system. Although you may be secure from invasion, the want of money will destroy your efforts. I object to the system of coercion which has been adopted. If you take the history of mankind from the earliest times down to the present, the precedents are twenty to one in favour of lenity, instead of coercion, to make a government prosper. You may make it high treason to doubt of the prosperity of the empire, and carry every thing before you; but the delusion will go off, and in a few months you will find that you have followed a false plan, and that it is too late to repent of it.—As to what is wanting, you could do it to-day, if you think fit. I have been told that the difference between a wise man and a weak one is, that the wise man sees an event about three days before the other. I am afraid the government of Berne, although generally speaking a wise one, has been too late in seeing its interest. I wish that we may not lose our time. All that is wanting with us is, that our affairs should be entrusted to some men of plain understanding, who can see before them for a few days. You should only do on the Thursday what you must do on the Monday.—I have always voted against motions of this kind. I was against it last year; but I am for it now, and I will tell your lordships why. I have had the experience of the year 1782, where I found that ministers were called in to make a peace, and were then dismissed. Men who have the confidence of the public are brought in for a particular purpose; and then they are succeeded again by the old ones they displaced; and the public, I am sorry to say it, have a very short

memory—they very soon forget all that is done by one set of men for them, and by another against them; so that the court may use its pleasure as to ministers after the first burst of indignation is over. I call for a dismissal of the present ministers immediately, because we are in a desperate situation, and not a moment is to be lost. Let us have an administration that may procure peace, and they will do you a great deal of good; although those who are now in power should return to it, and those who procure you peace be hanged for their trouble. As to the real remedy likely to take place, I confess I can see none, unless the king and queen could be convinced of their error and their danger; or the public seek those constitutional means that may produce the desired effect.

Lord *Mulgrave*, after noticing the unparliamentary manner in which the noble marquis had alluded to their majesties, asserted, that it was not solely to the choice of the king and queen, or to the favour of the court, but to the unanimous approbation of the people, that the present ministers were indebted for their situations and for their continuance in office. Not only was the conduct of his majesty's ministers arraigned in the speeches of the two noble lords who preceded him; they moreover extended their censure to the ministers of almost every other country, for their ill management of that grand confederacy in which they had embarked against France. Their conduct was also stigmatised by another noble lord as bordering on something like swindling; though it is well known that as far as we were affected, all our engagements had been honourably fulfilled. And how had ministers been enabled thus rigorously to fulfil them? Was it not by their unremitting endeavours to support the state of our finances? It had been stated by the noble marquis, that one campaign cost the enemy not less a sum than one hundred and forty million! while the expenses on our side of the same campaign did not exceed our ordinary resources. The confidence of the people in the abilities and integrity of the present cabinet, was also forcibly evinced by the spirit and alacrity with which they now pressed forward with voluntary contributions in aid of the exigencies of the state. The noble duke had made a calculation of the expenses of the war, between the period when, according to his grace, we could

have obtained peace, and the present. But, eager as his grace had been in the former debate of that evening to commute money for confinement, in his calculations of the expenses of the war, he had not included the dangers to the country from French principles and the war of French anarchists against this country, and all Europe. Ministers were also blamed for not having made peace with France. And why?—because delaying to make peace was establishing a military republic in the heart of Europe, while it was omitted to be considered, that making peace with that country was opening all Europe to the missionaries they would send forth in crowds to propagate their revolutionary doctrines. Was it worthy of a free and independent country to be so forward with its entreaties for peace, and that to a government which had shown itself so evidently adverse to every thing pacific? Let noble lords ask themselves what the countries had gained who had been the first to make peace, or those who had uniformly continued neutral? What would the king of Prussia say, who had lost his provinces on the Rhine? Consider for a moment the conduct of the French throughout Italy; their treatment of Venice; their behaviour to the duke of Tuscany; their return to Genoa for its partiality; and their still more recent conduct in the Pope's dominions, in his capital, and at this very time in Switzerland! As to Ireland, this he felt to be a delicate subject; and whatever opinion might be held respecting the necessity of what was called conciliatory measures, the present was not a state of things to admit of conciliation. On former occasions no cause of complaint had remained unredressed; but if the demands they now set up were to be conceded, then indeed would they appear to be conceded from meanness and from terror. The United Irishmen were prepared to throw their country into the hands of the enemy, and make it a province of France. That such was their intention was evident; if he might credit an article which he saw that day under the head of Ireland, in a morning print, which expressly stated, that among the papers of the Irish Directory lately taken, was found their resolution not to attend to what either House of Parliament might say, nor to accept of any thing short of a complete emancipation of their country, or in other words, what France holds out as a temptation to the rebels of every

country.—But supposing present ministers were dismissed, who were to be their successors? Were they to be the friends of the noble duke? Were they to be those gentlemen who would not condescend to come into office without insuring the attainment of their favourite objects, a radical reform, and a peace with France? On the subject of reform, how was the House and the country to know that the noble duke and his friends entertained the same sentiments as to what ought to be its extent? Radical parliamentary reform had been mentioned. Was it not clear that the head of the Corresponding Society and the head of the Whig Club (Mr. Fox and Mr. Horne Tooke) had solemnly engaged to act together? He did not wonder that the French were satisfied with the declarations of certain men in and out of parliament, and looked to them with confidence for support. While he could admire the splendid talents of the right hon. gentleman he had alluded to, what assurance had the House that upon his being in office, if the country and parliament should not concur in his plans of reform, he would not resort to the societies? He would not, however, impute to the men of whom he spoke, the intention of treacherously joining France. But when it was stated by the noble duke, that ministers could not make peace, and by the noble lord, that they could not conciliate Ireland, was there not great reason to apprehend that France, viewing a change of ministers as a change of the system of the war, and an acknowledgment that we were the original aggressors, would extend her demands with the lamentations of the new ambassador, and grow in insolence, as the ministers of the new creation enlarged their sympathies and professed their grief? But at all events, he was not for entrusting power to the hands of those whom the French looked upon as their friends, nor did he deem it safe or expedient to remove the present ministers, who enjoyed the confidence of the country, in order to make room for those who were supposed to be less objectionable to the French Directory.

Lord Grenville said, that it would easily be seen, from the whole course of argument by which the motion had been supported, that the present question related much less to the conduct or character of any individuals, than to the system on which the parliament and people of this country were at that moment acting, in

opposition to the arms and principles of France. In order to decry this system, and to induce the British nation to confess those crimes and follies, that injustice and cruelty, whith which the noble duke had charged them, he had revived all the unfounded allegations respecting the principle of the war, so often made in that place, and so often rejected by their lordships. These the noble duke had, with much labour, contrasted with each other; but their difference only proved the contradictions of his own accusations. The principles which he asserted to have been adopted and maintained by government, were indeed those principles which had on different occasions been imputed to them by the noble duke and his friends but which the ministers had then, as now, uniformly and unequivocally disclaimed. the decisive proof upon the subject was to be found, not in loose recollection or in vague reports, but on the Journals of the House. The speeches with which the king had opened and concluded each session of parliament, afforded an authentic record of the language of government respecting the origin, grounds and progress of the war. There were, besides, upon the Journals, many declarations which this House had made at different periods, sometimes at the express suggestion of ministers themselves, and with the avowed intention of obviating misrepresentation. Why were not these appealed to? What two of these could be produced which contradicted each other? What one which would support the statements of the noble duke? This, then, was his defence of parliament, against the imputation of having varied its language, or disguised its objects—of having engaged in the war for the restoration of monarchy in France, or of having pursued it, at any period, with any other view than that of obtaining a secure and honourable peace. The noble duke had next proceeded to condemn the alliances entered into for the prosecution of the war. It had been said that ministers had pledged themselves that the allies never would desert this country. Was it possible that such a pledge could have been given, or that parliament ever could require, or receive it? The British government could not control the conduct of foreign powers. They had, indeed alleged (particularly in the case of Austria) the various motives of good faith, honour, and dignity; of interest, and even of security, which

ought to induce that power to abide by its engagements with Great Britain. Yet if these considerations were ultimately without effect, we had, at least so long as they continued to operate, the advantage of the assistance we then received. If any continental powers are so infatuated as not to see, that by shaking the public faith and honour of their governments, they shake the very foundations of their thrones;—if they have not yet been taught, that by giving way to the present views of France, they are opening to her the gates of their own capitals, you may regret the circumstance for their sake—you must lament it for your own; but you cannot in justice, impute the blame of their blindness to men who act on more honourable principles, and with a wiser policy. We have under such circumstances at least this consolation, that if we now contend alone, it is against an enemy exhausted by the effects of that very system of alliance which the noble lords condemn. It was indeed curious to observe, that at the very moment when these alliances were most loudly blamed, and when one noble lord (Holland) had hazarded the extravagant assertion, that it would have been better to have subsidized these powers for concluding separate peace, the loss of their assistance was the very topic on which the same noble lords had most relied, in all their efforts to depress the spirit of their country. Ministers had endeavoured to procure that aid when it could be had: we then reaped the advantage of it; and even when its immediate operation has ceased, we feel at this moment its beneficial consequences. What would be said to any minister engaged in a just, necessary, and arduous contest, who declined to avail himself of any alliances, because there never could be any certainty of their permanence; or who refused a powerful aid at present, because it might possibly be withdrawn before the termination of the contest? The House was then told, that in every part of the war we had completely failed; and for that reason they were desired to withdraw their confidence from ministers, who had shewn themselves unable to defend the interests of their country. It would hardly be credited by any man who had not heard the noble lords, that in all their statements of the conduct and progress of the war, they had omitted even the slightest mention of any part of our naval triumphs.

On the affairs of the continent, in which we have a secondary interest, they had dwelt with peculiar emphasis; but of that which was the primary object to Great Britain, not a word had hitherto been said. This was the justice of the noble lords! They proposed to the House to condemn ministers, without even examining the principal feature of their case. For the systems of foreign courts, whom we could not direct; for the success of military plans, which we could not control; for the operations of foreign armies, in which we had not even the smallest share, they attack the character and arraign the conduct of ministers. Of that which is immediately within the sphere of British government, which claims the first duty of ministers, and the first attention of parliament; of that on which principally depend the national prosperity, security, and honour, they wish you to dismiss all consideration. Against this mode of trial, he must decidedly protest; claiming for himself and for his colleagues that share of credit, whatever it may be, reflected on them, from those triumphs, the chief praise of which was due to the valour and conduct of the British. The fact of these successes could not be denied. In that part of the war which belonged to England, and in which alone the conduct of the British government could appear entire and unmixed, we had not only not failed, but had obtained successes which surpassed the most brilliant examples of our ancestors. It was with their examples, with their naval triumphs, with their success and glory, that he was not afraid to compare the present war; demanding of his opponents what other period of our history could be found, when, after decisive and glorious victories successively gained over the fleets of France, Spain, and Holland, the British navy had rid triumphant at the same moment at the mouths of Brest, and Cadiz, and the Texel?

It had been that night asserted, that there was a period, during the successes or our allies, when France would have been disposed to peace, and that this disposition had been criminally neglected. It was difficult to meet such an assertion, because it did not specify the time to which it referred. He desired, therefore, first to deny it as a general assertion, and in the most unequivocal terms. As far as he could collect what was the particular period referred to, it was during the ty-

ranny of Robespierre. There was at that time no government in France, unless their lordships would dignify with that honourable term, assassins, butchers, and executioners, stigmatized with the universal execration of mankind. There was no disposition to peace with England, unless it could be found in the reports of Barrère, who then first brought forward the comparison of Rome and Carthage—who then first announced the principle *Delenda est Carthago*; leaving to his successors the first example of that language, since so completely adopted by the French Directory. So far was he from thinking that there was at that moment any chance of negotiation, that in his soul he believed any British minister then sent to Paris, would have been sent only to accompany the victims of that tyranny to the guillotine. From the moment of the fall of Robespierre, every opportunity that pointed towards peace had been eagerly embraced. The question of the negotiation at Paris, had that night been revived. A new accusation had that night been made. The noble duke had said, that the plan of peace then offered by Great Britain, rested on the partition and spoliation of the little powers of Europe. When called upon to specify the particulars, the noble duke had told the House, that the British projet took Trinidad from Spain, the Cape and Ceylon from Holland, and left the three partitioning powers in the possession of Poland. As to Trinidad, the noble duke had discovered his mistake, and therefore it was unnecessary to dwell upon it. He had never before heard Spain and Holland included in the description of the little powers of Europe. Nor would it have been considered as a proof of much disposition for peace on our part, if we had announced at Paris, that this blessing must be deferred till Russia, Austria, and Prussia were compelled by what means he knew not, to restore the ancient limits and integrity of Poland. We were no parties to that partition, which we had always reprobated; but which we had no means of preventing, much less of rescinding after its completion. Holland, when we were first driven into the war, was a friendly and independent power, with whom rested the defence of those possessions which are often considered as the keys of the British empire in India. We offered to France, that if she could replace Holland in that situation of independence and

amity towards us, we would restore those conquests: we even added, that if this, from subsequent events, could only partially be done, we would consider to what extent our own safety would allow us to relax from demands, in which that consideration had formed the principal ingredient. So far from plundering the little powers, the projet had been expressly framed in the view of preventing such a measure. If by the restoration of our conquests to France, the Netherlands had been procured for the Emperor, all plea for these extensive schemes of partition now in agitation, would have been at once removed. The failure of that plan had led to the system now pursued at Rastadt, without the concurrence of Great Britain. Of the negotiation at Lisle, even the noble duke had found it impossible to speak in any terms which could contradict the general impression of the country. He had therefore contented himself with blaming the choice of the negotiator. Speaking in the presence of that noble lord (Malmesbury), lord Grenville said he could not express all he felt on that occasion. He would only therefore remark, that he was now censured for employing a nobleman, on whose conduct in the most difficult situation, malignity and faction had never been able to cast the slightest imputation.

From this part of the subject lord Grenville passed to the origin of the war, which had again been brought forward, and particularly by one noble lord (Holland) who for the second time referred to supposed opinions delivered in that House long before he was a member of it, and who had charged him for having as he termed it, rebuked him on that subject. He certainly had not presumed to rebuke him for any part of his parliamentary conduct, but had taken the liberty to do that which he must again take the liberty of doing, namely, advise him to leave it to other lords to notice what had passed in parliament respecting the origin of the war, topics which had been repeatedly discussed and decided upon in that House, at a period when the noble lord could not possibly be supposed to have turned his attention to the grounds of those discussions and decisions. If, however, the noble lord was really desirous of obtaining information as to the causes of the war which France had declared against us, he might refer him to the Journals of the House, and to the other authentic do-

cuments of those transactions. But he thought the noble lord might even spare himself the pains of acquiring more accurate information of former transactions, and might easily form his judgment from what was now passing before his eyes. For, if it was true that present conduct afforded any criterion by which to judge of past intentions, or that the character and views of men and governments were expanded and developed by success, he might rest the question of French aggression on that ground alone, abandoning for the moment every one of those arguments and proofs on which that point had long ago been decided by their lordships. He would pass over every ground of jealousy or complaint which preceded the war—the occupation of the Netherlands; the navigation of the Scheldt; the repeated insults to our allies: the orders of Dumourier to attack Holland; the orders to Genet to stir up America against us; the decree of Universal Fraternity: the public audience given by the Convention to the ambassadors of British treason; the declaration of the French minister of marine to the Brest fleet, that they should plant the standard of liberty in England; the whole language and conduct of Chauvelin; nay even the declaration of war itself, made in the midst of negotiation, and at a moment when, by the confessions of Brissot, Robespierre, and Dumourier, England had manifested an unequivocal desire for the maintenance of peace—all these he consented to omit. The views of ambition and aggrandizement pursued by France upon the continent; her unjust aggression against Austria and Prussia; her unjust invasion of the German empire her unprovoked war against Spain, Sardinia, Naples, and even against Portugal, the antient ally of Great Britain—to none of those would he desire their attention; though there was not one which would not in any good period of our history have been deemed a sufficient reason for calling forth all the energy of this country. But when we saw Geneva and Avignon given up to plunder and massacre, without even the shadow of pretence; when Genoa was revolutionized as the reward of unjust partiality to France; when Venice, on no other ground than her obstinate adherence to neutrality in the midst of surrounding hostilities, was attacked, subdued, and obliterated from the rank and catalogue of nations; when Rome was made the victim of pretences which add mockery and insult

to savage cruelty; when every maritime neutral nation saw its commerce and navigation the prey of unbridled rapacity and avarice; when neither recent friendship nor the sense of reciprocal benefits, nor remoteness from the scene of European politics, nor long and patient forbearance under every injury, foreign and domestic could protect America in the enjoyment of that tranquillity which she had endeavoured to purchase by so many sacrifices, when even Switzerland herself was now driven to contend for her existence—the oldest friend and ally of France—venerated by all surrounding nations as the first asylum of liberty in Europe—respected always in the midst of the fiercest contests, as the inviolable sanctuary of peace, industry and virtue:—when such was the present conduct of France, might he not ask the noble lord himself, whether it did not demonstrate one invariable and uniform system, pursued alike against every nation, hostile or friendly, in peace, in amity, or in league, but always most inveterate against those governments which best provided for the happiness of their subjects?—From these topics, the noble lord had gone into a discussion of our domestic policy. Our finances had been represented as exhausted, and the system of voluntary contribution had been totally condemned. For his part, if he had thought the resources of his country exhausted, he should have been reluctant to declare and proclaim it, at a moment when, even by the confession of the noble lords themselves, France had haughtily rejected every idea of peace. But he thought the fact was otherwise. He saw, indeed, great burthens necessarily imposed, but he saw an ability and a spirit to bear them, and even to open fresh resources from voluntary donation. A mode which, though the noble marquis had now condemned, had at a former period been applauded in a memorable speech from the throne,* which if the noble marquis would take the trouble to turn to it on the Journals, would probably refresh his memory, and at least satisfy him that there was once a great minister in this country, who entertained very different sentiments on this subject.

With respect to our general situation,

* Speech from the Throne, 26th November 1782, when the marquis of Lansdown was first lord of the Treasury. See Vol. 23, p. 207.

the noble duke had asked, whether we had not sacrificed some of the strongest bulwarks of our public freedom? He replied with confidence, that we had not—parliament had performed its duty, in restraining the progress of sedition and treason, but no restraint was imposed upon the liberty of any faithful or loyal subject.—The necessity of any remarks upon the subject of Ireland, was wholly precluded by what the House had heard from a noble lord (Downshire) who spoke with all the authority due to his thorough knowledge of the subject, to his deep interest in it, and to the firm and manly part which he had personally taken in support of the laws and constitution of his country, and of the lives and properties of his fellow subjects. He completely agreed with that noble lord, that there was no salvation to Ireland, nor any chance of preserving its connexion with Great Britain, but in the pursuit of the present system. Much had been said about conciliation, and one noble lord had gone so far as to assert, that even if there were a disposition to conciliation, it would not be received at the hands of the present ministers; as if we were really to believe that when the committees of assassination deliberated about the plunder of a house, or the murder of a magistrate, they first inquired whether the noble marquis or the noble duke had yet been named to the situation of minister in England. If conciliation to them was meant, he knew of none which could succeed; conciliation to Ireland had been invariably pursued by the English government, but particularly by the present ministers. Almost the first act of the present chancellor of the exchequer, had been, to offer to Ireland a liberal participation of the British market, at the hazard of all his popularity in England; and though the whole mercantile and manufacturing interest was taught to clamour against him, for sacrificing, as they said their prosperity to the interests of Ireland that boon was rejected by the Irish parliament, under what had been truly called the silliest delusion ever practised on the councils of any nation. Since that time the conciliatory disposition of the ministers towards Ireland had shown itself on every occasion. In the present moment, he was satisfied that the only real conciliation to Ireland was, to protect the lives of its magistrates, to defend the property of its inhabitants and to maintain its do-

mestic laws, and its imperial connexion with Great Britain.

Such were the grounds on which the present motion had been supported. It had been imputed to ministers, but wholly without foundation, that they had made the foolish and arrogant declaration, that except themselves, there were no men in the country of sufficient talents to conduct government, and of sufficient loyalty to be trusted. For his colleagues and for himself he disclaimed such an assertion: he knew, that among the numerous ranks of those who had supported the present system, there were many men of the highest integrity, character and talents; many men of abilities much superior to his, and to whom, whenever it should please his majesty to place them in his situation, he should readily give way, knowing as he did their steadiness in support of the same system in which they had hitherto concurred; though even then, he feared it would not be without some secret regret, that he should see himself no longer thought worthy to share the dangers and to partake of the honour of the present contest. When he had said thus much of himself, he must assert with respect to his colleagues, that he knew not where there could be found, even among all the supporters of government, men better qualified in honour, integrity, talent, and virtue, to fill the arduous situations in which they were now placed. But allowing for a moment, that such a change were made, would that answer the purpose of the present motion? It would not—the choice must therefore be confined within very narrow limits. The noble duke had excluded himself and his immediate party—he had indeed offered support to those who would accept office on the conditions he prescribed; but he had said, that if they took it, he should admire their courage. In this lord Grenville said he completely agreed—to rely on such support so offered, and for such measures, would indeed be an act of desperate courage, and if the present motion was agreed to, he thought parliament must adopt the recent law of the Dutch Convention, which sentenced every man to transportation who refused to be a minister. The noble lords retained their own opinions in favour of “radical reform;” but these, apparently, for some reason of management or intrigue, seemed to be put less forward in this night’s debate than they had been before—the light was

thrown on other parts of the picture, while this was shaded over, and kept with care in the back ground. Still, however, it was there. The noble duke had expressly declared, that he would never belong to any government that did not carry through this radical reform. And he had concluded his speech with pompous imprecations on himself, if ever he consented to act with the present ministers, whom he justly considered as hostile to it. The noble duke might be assured, that whatever dislike he might feel to their system, it could not possibly exceed the settled detestation which they entertained for the principles and conduct of radical reformers, though they might not think it necessary to express their sentiments in the tone or language of tragedy. Their opinion of radical reform was the same which had long ago been delivered by Condorcet, a great authority on the subject of revolutions, but who had not discovered the art of so guiding the storm which he had contributed to raise, as to escape becoming himself one of its earliest sacrifices. When Condorcet announced with joy, that the patriots of England were labouring in that cause, he added, that from such reform, the transition would be short indeed, to the establishment of a complete republic.—The noble duke consented, however, that the new ministers should postpone the question of reform in England:—but in Ireland, probably because the danger there seemed less, or the objection weaker, he required that it should immediately be carried. Nor was this all—peace must be procured with France, notwithstanding what had been confessed of her inveterate hostility to us; and a noble marquis had said what he seemed to think matter of much indifference to the House, though to the new ministers it might be an object of some consideration, that the peace must be made, though those who made it would probably be hanged for doing so.—The principles on which such a peace was likely to be concluded, might easily be collected. In addition to all that the noble duke had said, of the injustice and wickedness of the war which this country had ventured to maintain for its own defence, the noble marquis had given the House an estimate of the value of our foreign possessions, which he had described as a load and burthen on the shoulders of this country. Combining, therefore, these two principles, learnt from the supporters

of the present motion, the new negotiator was to proceed to France. He was, in the first instance, to make our humble apology to the Directory, for the insolence in presuming to defend ourselves, to express our deep regret at our injustice, in maintaining against their will, our properties and lives, the constitution and independence of our country; and to assure them of our sincere and contrite repentance for all the carnage which their wickedness had occasioned. To such an address it could not be expected that much favour would be shown. If we had any interests to maintain in such a negotiation, we should undoubtedly be told that we had confessed our own crimes, and must abide the punishment which France imposed. We might, however, perhaps, expect at last, that the Directory, taking some pity upon us, would agree to deliver us from part of the burthen under which we labour; they might possibly have the goodness to relieve us of Jamaica; to take upon their own shoulders the defence of our Indian possessions, perhaps even to discharge us of the whole weight and load of Bengal. And though it was true, that by these operations we should lose the best part of our commerce, more than half our revenue, and nearly the whole source and supply of our naval strength, we should certainly remain a light, disburthened, and well-compacted power, peculiarly able to resist the future enterprizes of the Directory, and to defend ourselves against that which even the noble lords had described as the summit of human misery—subjection to the present government of France. If these were the principles upon which the peace was to be made, he seriously believed the noble marquis's prediction would be literally verified—the ministers who made it (whoever they might be) would certainly be hanged, and he was sure they would deserve it.—With respect to Ireland, the difficulty might be greater. The noble lords had appeared to feel, how impossible it was to persuade the House that a reform of parliament, and giving the little that remained to be granted to the Catholics, could answer their description of the effects to be produced by conciliation; they had, therefore, protested against being obliged to specify any particular terms of conciliation, but had defined it to be, in one word, the giving whatever Ireland wants. Supposing, therefore, for a moment, that a parliamentary reform in Ire-

land was easy as it appeared difficult, and that the other measure could be adopted in its full extent without an act of treason, there would still remain for the new ministers to discover, and to grant, what Ireland wants. He was apprehensive that the wants of different classes of persons in that kingdom, would be found not very consistent with each other. The landed gentleman, the merchant, the farmer, and the industrious artisan, would probably want to preserve their property; the juryman and magistrate would want not to be butchered; the faithful and loyal subject of every class, would want to preserve his allegiance to his sovereign; while the conspirator would want to destroy all property, to place the life of every man at his mercy, and finally, to subject his country to the domination of France. It was to resist these principles that his colleagues and himself were desirous to remain in office; willing to concede their situations to others, if by others more effectual resistance could be made; but ready to expose themselves to every danger in defence of the laws, constitution, and independence of their country.

But the House had heard that night another matter of no slight importance. The Corresponding Societies in England had been mentioned. What those societies were, he need not remind their lordships: their publications, their meetings, their declarations, were in the memory of every man. A criminal had lately been convicted at Maidstone, of attempting to seduce the troops, and he was found to belong to these societies. A noble lord had told them, that even the United Irishmen would not have proceeded to the lengths they had done, without the encouragement of these societies. In one word, he could distinctly state, that, in every corner of the king's dominions, whatever sedition or treason could be found, whatever incitement to domestic tumult, whatever encouragement to foreign invasion, to these societies it was uniformly to be traced. Yet with these very societies, it had been stated by a most respectable member of that House (lord Mulgrave), that the noble duke and his party were suspected to have formed a mysterious and enigmatical connexion. He trusted, that before the House separated that night, this suspicion would be cleared up; that they should hear this mystery unfolded, and this enigma solved.

He hoped it was impossible that any member of that House could have the smallest difficulty in clearing himself from such a charge; in disavowing it openly, or in explaining it to the satisfaction of his country. He called solemnly on the noble duke to do so.—For himself, and those with whom he had the happiness to be connected, he had explained to the House the motives of their conduct. It was for their lordships to decide upon them. Be that decision what it might, it would not affect the principles on which they acted: anxious only to bear their part, whatever it might be which was assigned to them, in that noble stand which placed their country at the present moment in a state of greater consideration and respect in Europe, than ever she had acquired at the head of the most triumphant league. If they were anxious for glory, it was for the glory of having stood foremost in that resistance, first in labour, first in danger, and he trusted, not last in honour; animating their country to its ancient spirit, and enforcing to the utmost the necessity of that resistance which, if steadily persevered in, he was confident would successfully withstand a torrent that had torn up by the roots whatever had once bent before it.

The Duke of *Bedford* said, he would not at that late hour have trespassed on their lordships' patience with a word of reply, had not insinuations been thrown out in the course of the debate, the impressions of which he could not suffer to go out into the world without some answer. The noble secretary of state had again endeavoured to assimilate his own fate with that of the House and the country, in order to avert the vengeance of an irritated and injured people. His grace trusted that his arguments would rest on the mind of the House, such as he had adduced them, not such as they had been misrepresented. He was now more than ever determined not to trouble them any more; because his conduct, and not the distresses of the country, was made the matter of discussion. He did not wish any longer to amuse the people; but to teach them to turn their eyes to the conduct of ministers which would soon induce them to resort to other persons better qualified for the task of governing them. He felt no surprise at being calumniated by the noble secretary; indeed, he expected it from him. But it did surprise and grieve him to have such insinuations

thrown out against him by noble lords of independent minds, who must know they could not be true. They would best judge whether he had formed any mysterious and enigmatical connexion with the Corresponding Society, or with any set of men who were known to be traitors to their country. He was now called on to answer to the charge alleged in such extraordinary terms and phrases as management, intrigue, trick, and mysterious enigmatical connexion with the Corresponding Society, and it might appear a matter of astonishment to the House, that he had to tell them that to such charges he made no reply. There was such a thing as true honour, and there were characters who imbibed the principles of true honour from their earliest infancy, and who, in riper years, brought them to maturity. Men of true honour were as little capable of suspecting others of management, intrigue, trick, and mysterious, enigmatical connexion, as they were themselves. He should be sorry indeed if the House imagined he could descend to such mean and degrading practices; but to those who suspected him of so doing, he would make no reply but a declaration of sovereign contempt for them, their character, their conduct, and their opinions.

The House divided: Contents, 11; Proxies, 2 — 13. Non-Contents, 88; Proxies, 25—113.

List of the Minority.

Duke of Norfolk	Earl Suffolk
Duke of Bedford	Earl Besborough
Marquis of Lansdown	Viscount Maynard
Earl of Derby	Lord Say and Sele
Earl of Thanet	Lord Holland
Earl of Tankerville	

The Resolution proposed by lord Romney was then put and agreed to.

Protest against the Rejection of the Duke of Bedford's Motion.] The following Protest was entered on the Journals:

“Dissentient,

“Because we feel it to be a duty prescribed to us by necessity, and dictated equally by our love for our country, and by our regard for the person and dignity of the king himself, to declare our solemn and conscientious conviction, that nothing short of an immediate dismissal of his majesty's present ministers, and a change of the system on which they have conducted the government, can enable us to support our present accumulated distress, or afford us a chance of averting the dangers with

which we are on all sides surrounded, and which, if not encountered with adequate fortitude and wisdom, threaten certain ruin and dissolution to the power, laws, and liberties of these kingdoms.

(Signed)

BEDFORD
DERBY
THANET
NORFOLK, E. M.
HOLLAND
PONSONBY."

Debate in the Lords on the State of Ireland.] March 26. The Earl of *Moir* said:—I rise in consequence of some observations which fell from a noble marquis (Downshire) in the debate of Thursday last, which I learnt, as well from a perusal of the public papers, as from conversation with some persons who were present on that occasion. I abstained from attending the discussion on that day, because there were some conclusions in the motion of the noble duke which I could not wholly approve. I have now to regret that I was not present, as I might have spared myself the necessity of now troubling your lordships. A noble peer stated himself prepared to give a broad contradiction to the positions advanced by me in a former debate upon the present state of Ireland. Of every thing which I advanced in this House, I offered to bring evidence. I afterwards went over to Ireland, laid down the same positions, and offered the same proof. That was precisely the place where, if contradiction could be given, it might have been brought forward with effect; and as none was offered there, I little expected to hear the circumstances controverted in this House. It is not my practice to make assertions upon slight grounds. My statements were formed upon upwards of a hundred affidavits, which I have brought down with me this day; and the use I shall make of them will be determined by the mode of contradiction with which the noble lord may feel himself disposed to meet them. If I am driven to do so, I may read them as a part of my reply, or otherwise I shall deposit them in the hands of the noble lord upon the woolsack. It is proper, however, that I should restate my former positions, to enable the noble lord to reply to them distinctly. I asserted, in the first place, that many districts and whole provinces, were put out of the king's peace, and under military law; that the military, in many instances, committed with im-

punity the most inordinate excesses, and a great number of houses were burned, and the inhabitants driven from their former habitations; that the tocsin or curfew was sounded at nine o'clock at night, to oblige the peasantry to put out their fires and their candles; and that this was so rigorously executed as, in one instance particularly, and no doubt there were many others, to outrage every feeling of humanity. I asserted, that torture was applied in the exploded manner of piqueting, to oblige the miserable inhabitants not only to confess against themselves, but also to extort from them informations against others. I farther stated, that in consequence of these oppressions, the trade of the country was rapidly declining. All these statements I undertake now to prove by affidavits. There are ways, undoubtedly in which it is competent for me to bring these affidavits before the House and the public. But apprehensive that in the present irritable state of Ireland, the publication of these facts may tend to inflame the minds of the people, I think it a more discreet mode to put them in the hands of the noble lord upon the wool-sack. My resolution, however, in this respect, will be decided by that species of contradiction which I shall hear in the course of the debate; for I owe it to my own character to show, that I am not capable of making light or groundless assertions. For the present, I shall wait for the noble lord's reply.

The Marquis of *Downshire* said:—I am exceedingly sorry that the state of Ireland should be the subject of debate in this House, which certainly has no jurisdiction over the executive government of that country. Such discussions, without being capable of producing any good effect, may do a great deal of mischief. I had reason to regret my not being present at the time when the noble lord made the motion to which he has alluded. I could then have explained to him how much he was misinformed; and I am now ready to correct him upon that subject in any manner or in any place he may think proper. I censure not the motives of the noble lord, being perfectly convinced that he thought his information correct, and acted in the manner his opinion led him to think most beneficial to his country; but I must add, that I hold his conduct, in this instance, to have been ill-judged and indiscreet. Having been for nine months myself engaged in the focus of

rebellion, I may be allowed to have more direct information than it was within the reach of other noble lords to attain; and it was from that knowledge I spoke in contradiction to the noble earl. That the military in some cases were guilty of more excess and severity than the lovers of good order could wish, is not to be disputed, but what I asserted on a former night, and what, I still maintain, is, that these excesses were not committed by the authority and countenance of the executive government, who on every occasion took care that such misconduct should be restrained and punished. I also assert, that no outrages were committed with the consent or knowledge of the officers; and of that I am enabled to speak with the more certainty, as I was engaged myself in that service, for which I am not sorry to have become an object of aversion to the United Irishmen. But it must be considered, that many of the regiments consisted of raw and undisciplined men; and the noble lord had himself experienced, in America, the great difficulty of restraining soldiers of that description within the limits of regularity and good order. The noble lord must recollect that the opposition prints of that time were filled with invectives against the outrages and cruelties said to be exercised by his lordship's soldiers; and that, after the execution of colonel Haymes, and when the noble lord was himself made prisoner, his friends in this country were greatly apprehensive that he would be sacrificed to the laws of retaliation. That all these reproaches were ill-founded, no man knows better than myself, who served with him all the time, and co-operated in all his measures. However ardent may be his zeal upon the present occasion, he should reflect upon the difficulties of a like nature which he had once in his own person to encounter. The troops in Ireland committed some excesses; but it might be remembered that they had the greatest provocation, and that nothing could exceed the atrocious conduct of the United Irishmen. I mean not to go back from any measures I have taken, or any advice I have given; and I here aver, that I was one of the first to recommend to the Irish government the system of coercion against those traitors and rebels the United Irishmen. By this I incurred their hatred, as appears from the late conviction of a man who undertook to assassinate me, and who, when brought before a jury, could

not be saved even by the eloquence of Mr. Curran. I always acted in concert with general Lake, an officer of approved talents, than whom I know no man of a more humane heart, a cooler head, or a sounder judgment. The system of parliamentary reform and catholic emancipation is the thinnest disguise imaginable to the treason of the Irish rebels, whose efforts tend to disunite their country from the crown of Great Britain, and reduce it to a province of the French republic. With men of such designs and dispositions, no conciliatory measures could produce any good effect; and their atrocities are continually inflaming the minds of the soldiers. A regiment beheld nine or ten of their comrades shot in one day, in consequence of having been deluded by the machinations of the United Irishmen; and it was not extraordinary if it gave a keener edge to their resentment. It is not easy to have a conception of the various artifices by which, in papers, handbills, &c. these miscreants laboured to spread disaffection amongst the military. I myself, as governor of the county of Down, have had numbers of posting-bills brought me in the morning found stuck up at the doors of houses, with different inscriptions, one of which was, "to Connaught, or to Hell." The soldiers, therefore, were disposed to retaliate upon them for the punishment of their misguided comrades, seduced by their manœuvres. But it was never found that any officer partook in those excesses; and on every occasion, the government was zealous to suppress and punish them. All who are acquainted with the dispositions of those rebels, are unanimous in the belief that coercion alone can produce any salutary effect upon them. I never knew a Catholic of knowledge, or education, who was a friend to what is termed, unqualified Catholic emancipation, nor an enlightened Presbyterian, who was an advocate for radical reform. As to what has been said of the tocsin being sounded, to warn the peasantry to put out their lights, the accounts are greatly exaggerated. Such a measure was never universally adopted. It was, indeed, pursued in the particular districts which were for the time put out of the king's peace; but in such circumstances it was indispensably necessary. It might, indeed, in some cases, be attended with individual hardships; but these must always give way to the public convenience and neces-

sities. Had he been aware of any occasion for so doing, he might have been furnished with affidavits without number, in support of all his statements.

There being no question before the House, the motion of adjournment was put and carried.

Debate in the Commons on the Defence Bill.] March 27. Mr. Secretary Dundas moved for leave "to enable his Majesty more effectually to provide for the defence and security of the realm, and for indemnifying persons who may suffer in their property by such measures as may be necessary for that purpose." The House, he said, would go along with him in the opinion, that the zeal and spirit which, so much to the honour of this country, did exist, should be reduced to a system, that, when the people were called forth, to exertions, in the cause of the country, they might act with regularity; that, in place of that confusion which must naturally be the consequence of any alarm of an approaching or invading enemy, every man, desirous of coming forward to repel that enemy, might distinctly know the part he was called on to act. The object of the bill (said Mr. Dundas), is to have the power of knowing, in case of emergency, who are ready to appear in arms, in order to co-operate with the existing power of the country, and to enable those who are so inclined, to be put into that situation which may be most answerable to giving effect to their inclinations. It is farther intended to give government legal power to investigate what force is in the country, competent to act in the shape of pioneers, drivers of waggons, or to perform the various other services which are connected with the operations of an army. One great provision of the bill will be to make compensation to those who shall suffer by the attempts of the enemy, and the measures taken to resist them: and in order that no person may be induced to withdraw his stock from the general service of the country, or may suffer from any part of his stock being destroyed by the enemy, or appropriated by the country for this purpose, the provisions of the bill go to render indemnification certain, either where property is applied to the service of our own country, or is destroyed in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy. It must occur to every one, that, in the prospect of an invasion, it

will become necessary, in particular districts, though it is impossible to point where at present, to erect covers for batteries, and to raise works in critical situations, where the operations of the enemy are most likely to be directed: for this purpose it may be found necessary, that pieces of ground should be appropriated for such erections: but if it is expedient to check the attempts of the enemy, by such means, it is no less so that it should be fully understood that complete indemnification will be made, and that no man will suffer by any aid which he may contribute to the public service. There are other circumstances proper to be adverted to by the provisions of the bill. It may be exceedingly necessary to remove the property of the inhabitants of villages, who may be employed in arms for the defence of their country, or as pioneers, and to carry off their flock, in order to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy. It may occur that much cruelty and much inhumanity would be exercised, if, at the time that able-bodied men were employed in the field, some provision was not made for the infants and aged, who would be left unprotected: to those cases the bill will apply. The general object of it will be, to give the lords-lieutenants of counties every necessary aid, for enabling them to embody those who may be prompted to come forward, as they now have, with regard to embodying the general militia of the country. By this means, Sir, I trust, that not only the whole spirit of the country will be animated and invigorated, and be fully equal to any exertions which the enemy may be able to make, but will prove, that while other countries are falling to wreck, we stand a proud and powerful nation, in the middle of the ocean, and will also proclaim that there still exists one spot in the world determined to repel the attacks of those who would enslave it.

General Tarleton did not oppose the specific measure before the House; but offered some observations, of which the following is the most important. Formerly the enemy had sent an army to Ireland: but now that Ireland was put into a proper state of defence, and proper measures taken for preventing a repetition of attacks in that quarter: where then, was this country most open to danger? On the eastern coast, which was not far distant from the capital. If the

French should march thither, their march would be as rapid as possible. They knew there were no fortified towns to be left behind them: they would not encumber themselves with heavy baggage and provisions, which, by retarding their movements, would afford time to render their efforts ineffectual. Did Buonaparté do so, when he was marching to Vienna? No, no. He would therefore advise, that so many troops should not be left in the southern, the western, and the northern extremities of the kingdom, but that the best of our troops, both infantry and cavalry, should be drawn to the neighbourhood of London, where our force should be concentrated; detachments being left to protect the principal commercial towns, such as Newcastle, Hull, Liverpool, and Bristol. Of Buonaparté, with whom he hoped to have the pleasure one day of talking over battles, he spoke much as a great and distinguished general.

General *Delancey* acknowledged that Buonaparté had done wonders. But, while praises were bestowed on that general, it was remarkable that not a word had been said of a distinguished personage who held the chief military command in this country. Whenever an occasion should arrive, he was convinced, that personage would manage the British forces in such a manner as would show that there were officers in other countries besides France. If Buonaparté did land on the British shores, general *Delancey* had no doubt but all the glory he had obtained, would be speedily tarnished.

Sir *W. Pulteney* declared his hearty approbation of the measure proposed, and thought that the right hon. secretary had great merit in bringing it forward. The being armed would excite in the nation a high military spirit. The first idea of an unarmed man was to run from danger: but his feelings were very different when he was armed. He hoped that measures would be taken to embody a much greater number of men than could be brought against them. If the enemy were to succeed in landing, and he never doubted but that a landing might be effected, notwithstanding our great superiority at sea, it was of the greatest moment that we should have the superiority of numbers.

Leave was given to bring in a bill. It was read a first and second time, committed, and after a third reading, passed on the 2nd of April.

Resolutions of the Lords relating to Divorce Bills.] March 28. The Lord Chancellor moved the following Resolutions; which, after a short conversation, were agreed to:

1. "That for the future no Petition for any Bill of Divorce shall be presented to this House, unless an official copy of the proceedings, and of a definitive sentence of divorce *à Mensâ et thoro* in the ecclesiastical court, at the suit of the party desirous to present such petition, shall be delivered upon oath at the bar of this House, at the same time.

2. "That for the future, upon the second reading of any Bill of Divorce, the petitioner praying for the same do attend this House, in order to his being examined at the bar, whether there has or has not been any collusion, directly, or indirectly, on his part, relative to any act of adultery that may have been committed by his wife, or whether there be any collusion, directly or indirectly, between him and his wife, or any other person or persons touching the said bill of divorce, or touching any action at law which may have been brought by such petitioner against any person for criminal conversation with the petitioner's wife; and also, whether at the time of the adultery of which such petitioner complains, his wife was, by deed or otherwise, by his consent, living separate or apart from him, and released by him, as far as in him lies, from her conjugal duty; or whether she was, at the time of such adultery, cohabiting with him, and under the protection and authority of him as her husband.

3. "That the said orders be declared standing orders, and that they be entered on the roll of standing orders of this House."

Debate on Mr. Pitt's Proposition for the Redemption of the Land Tax.] April 2. The House having resolved itself into a committee of the whole House,

Mr. *Pitt* rose and said:—The subject which I am now about to submit to the committee, has of late excited considerable attention, and given rise to considerable inquiry. As the ultimate judgment which the committee will form upon it, must depend upon the consideration of a great variety of details, it is not my intention to call upon you for any decision to-day. I trust, however, that the principle upon which the measure is founded, requires only to be very shortly stated, in order to engage

your attention, and to recommend itself to your notice. That, in the present situation of the country, every measure which tends to invigorate public credit, which will facilitate the means of supporting that struggle into which we were driven for our necessary defence, and which has been prolonged by the obstinate ambition of the enemy: that every measure which will furnish fresh resources to animate the courage of the nation, and to enable us to maintain that character which Englishmen have ever displayed, has a fair claim to the favour of the legislature, I am warranted to pronounce, from the experience of the present session, the unanimity you have shown upon former occasions, and the recent exertions you have made for the public defence. When I recollect, then, the temper which parliament has uniformly manifested, I am sensible that it is needless to say any thing in recommendation of the principle, provided the measure itself be practicable. The leading object of the plan which I shall have the honour to propose is, to absorb a great quantity of stock, to transfer a considerable portion of the funded security to landed security, and, by the redemption of the present land tax, to purchase a quantity of stock, more than equivalent to the amount of the tax. That tax will be made applicable in the same manner as at present, but the proportion of stock it will purchase will be one fifth larger, presenting at once a considerable pecuniary gain to the public, and an advantage to the individual by whom the redemption shall be made. The chief recommendation of the plan, however, is, that it will diminish the capital stock, and remove that which presses more severely upon us than any inconvenience with which our situation is attended. It is a truth now universally felt, a truth which the enemy have acknowledged, and which faction itself will not venture to deny, that even in this stage of the war, the state of every part of our trade, our industry, and revenue, is astonishing and proud for this country; that our general capital and wealth is greater than they were even at its commencement: that our commerce, so far from having experienced a diminution as in other wars, has greatly increased; that our industry and manufactures, subject to those local fluctuations which are inseparable from a system so extended and diversified, have sensibly advanced; and that, on a general view, our situation exhibits every symp-

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tom of internal wealth, that we are richer, that we possess a greater command of capital than this country ever enjoyed at any former period. It is singular, too, that under the depreciation which the funds have experienced, the price of land has maintained itself above the average of former wars, and equal to the price in times of peace; very little indeed below the unexampled state of a few years preceding the war.

I am aware that no argument is required to demonstrate the necessity of great exertion in the circumstances in which we are now placed. You have already expressed your opinion of that necessity, and have shown your readiness to employ our resources. All then that is wanting is judgment and discrimination in the mode of calling them into action. If there be any chance of diminishing the capital of the funded debt, which is the only pressure by which our efforts are embarrassed, the measure, by which it is to be effected is founded upon clear and substantial principles of policy. This is a principle upon which the House has acted in the course of the present session. Upon this principle you felt the expediency of making an extraordinary exertion to raise, within the year, a considerable part of the supplies. It is a farther satisfaction for us to know, that the energy of the measure has been fully proved; that though difficult in detail, though encountered by considerable opposition on its appearance, and many obstacles in its progress, its advantages have been recognised by the country. Though necessary to qualify it by many modifications, which diminished the full effect it was intended to have, yet the voluntary zeal of the country has borne testimony to the principle; and the contributions with which the patriotism of individuals has come forward for the public defence, furnishes the best proof, that in this measure, the legislature was in unison with the sentiments of the people. From what I have heard, the objection to the measure of increasing the assessed taxes has been, that it did not go far enough; and commercial men have declared, that it did not embrace sufficiently that species of property of which they are possessed. Whatever may be the decision of the House, as to the principle of the plan which I am about to propose, I am sure that any measures which tend to give effect to the same object, which will combine an annual saving with other col-

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lateral advantages, which, without imposing any new burthens upon the public, will be attended with considerable benefit to the nation as well as individuals, cannot fail to be received with the highest favour by this House, and to secure the approbation of the country.

In stating the principle upon which the plan proceeds, I am aware that I have claimed a great deal of merit to the measure, in this, however, I claim none from the proposal. The principle itself possesses that recommendation which usually belongs to good principles, that it is so simple that the advantages which are produced by its effects do not necessarily suppose a great share of merit in the proposer.

The amount of the present land-tax is about 2,000,000*l.* This sum has been annually granted by parliament for a century past, and has been levied at the same rate in different districts. The repartition which was originally made has continued so long, and the sum of 4*s.* in the pound for so considerable a period has never been exceeded, that it will be readily acknowledged that this sum ought not to be diminished, at least till many other burthens which weigh more heavily upon the public have been taken off. Taking this state then as that upon which the present land-tax is raised, it is proposed, by changing the security of a part of the funded capital into landed security, to cover the two millions of existing land tax by two millions four hundred thousand of dividends. By this measure it is evident that, upon the supposition that the whole of the land-tax were to be redeemed, the public would gain 400,000*l.* The terms upon which the purchase is intended to be made, while they produce this benefit to the public, will present that advantage to the land owners, which will render it eligible for them to redeem, and tempt them to give full effect to the measure. Eighty millions would thus be taken out of the market, and the public credit, relieved by so great a pressure, would be proportionably strengthened. Having stated this brief outline, I shall advert to a few of the objections against the measure, which have yet come to my knowledge.

It is obvious that the first step necessarily involved in the measure is to render the present land-tax perpetual, universally redeemable, and where not redeemed, always subject to redemption according

to certain regulations. There is one objection which at once suggests itself, and to which a very satisfactory answer occurs. I mean the objection that may be made on constitutional grounds. It may be said that, to render a grant which is now annual, perpetual, is to remove the constitutional checks of parliament over the public expense, and to render perpetual what is now voted as an annual supply. I do not deny that the adoption of the present measure would create some alteration, but the objection upon the constitutional ground is very easily removed. Nothing can be more easy than to place under the annual control of parliament funds that are at present permanent, equivalent to those which are taken away by this measure. Certain branches of the consolidated fund may be made annual, even to a greater amount than two millions of land-tax. This would answer every purpose of constitutional control. Ministers would not then have it in their power to apply money without consent of parliament more than before. It is my intention, therefore, to move a particular resolution to obviate this objection. Such funds as parliament may judge most expedient for the purpose of control may be selected and submitted to annual vote in the same manner as the land-tax, and instead of two millions, the sum may be augmented to the full amount of the dividends which will be taken out of the market. Parliament will thus have the annual control of 2,400,000*l.* By this means it will so happen that the constitutional check of this House will for some years be more and never will be less, than it was before.

Another objection urged by some is, that from the present repartition to perpetrate the existing land tax would be to perpetrate an inequality which is so great as to form no inconsiderable abuse. They say, that if the tax were equalized, they would have no objection to render it perpetual. Let us consider this objection more closely and attentively. Since the revolution, especially during the latter part which has succeeded, it has never been in contemplation to equalise the land tax by a new repartition according to the real amount of property, and the ability of different districts. We know that in this House, though the vote for the land tax had the undoubted right to adopt a new repartition, no such proposition was ever made. With the experience of a century

before us, then, if we have seen no such attempt ever made, it is more likely that it would be corrected, even were the vote to be annual, than if the grant were made perpetual?

I do not now argue whether it would have been right to devise the repartition at present established. I am ready to admit that I consider it to have been an original defect of the present plan of repartition, that no periodical revision was fixed. I think that it would have been wise to have made such a provision, and that it would have been happy for the country had it been done. Two important guards would be necessary: to prevent the inequality from being too great, and at the same time not to discourage improvement. That principle, however, not being at first recognized, and property having been since transferred without any attention to it, would it now be wise, just, or popular, to make a new valuation? I think not. If so many years experience has shown that no inclination to establish a different repartition prevailed, ought we to allow much weight to the objection, that to perpetuate the tax would be to perpetuate the inequality.

I have likewise heard, that it has been objected that this very measure would tend to introduce an equal repartition. It ought not to be expected that these opposite objections will come from the same quarter, and that a grievance will be felt both ways. It does happen, however, that the same mind embraces opposite and contradictory objections. Those who are determined to object to every thing, may continue to bring forward in a regular opposition arguments against a measure which do not proceed upon the same principle. On the present occasion, however, I do not expect that this mode of attack will be employed; at least I do not anticipate such a mode of opposition from any of those I now see before me. The question, then, is, does the present measure give any new facility for the introduction of a general land-tax? If the measure did give any new facility for employing the substantial resources of the country, and deriving additional means of strength without distressing the people, I should be more disposed to claim it as a recommendation, than to consider it as a defect. In times like the present, whatever supplies us with the means of calling into action the real resources of the country, and giving new energy to the contest we maintain, would

deserve the cordial support of every man who is a friend to the happiness and prosperity of the country, and in a particular manner of those who would be the greatest sufferers, if the hostile designs of the enemy were to succeed.

The measure to be proposed to you, however, possesses no such recommendation. It leaves the question of a more equal repartition of the land tax precisely where it found it. Parliament now has the undoubted right to raise more than four shillings in the pound on the land; and what greater authority would it acquire were the present redeemed? If the whole were to be redeemed, for it would be sanguine to suppose that the whole will be redeemed within a few years by the owners, the only thing necessary to be provided as expressly as any legislative provision can guard, is, that if ever a new land tax is imposed, it shall not be imposed upon those who have redeemed in any different proportion from that on those who have not redeemed. It would be necessary to provide that the amount of what may have been redeemed should be deducted from any new impost. It appears to me that such a provision would secure those who shall take the benefit of redemption as much from any additional charge in future on that account, as those who had not bought up their land tax at all. This, then, appears a sufficient answer to the general objections which have been suggested against the measure. As to the various details which it embraces, it would be idle to enter into any minute discussion of them, till the committee has had farther time to take them into mature consideration.

There is one objection, however, which is partly connected with the detail of the measure, and partly applies as a general objection. This regards the option to be given in the second instance to become a purchaser of the tax, provided the owner himself should be unwilling or unable to buy. Cases may occur in which the proprietor finds it inconvenient to make the advances necessary for the redemption. Great pains, however, have been taken to lighten this inconvenience. Every attention has been paid to give the landholder all the advantages consistent with the ultimate success of the scheme. It is of infinite importance to gain during the war every benefit which the measure is calculated to afford; it is of the utmost importance to secure that assistance to credit,

which will supply us with the means of that resistance which our independence, our property, and our happiness calls upon us to make. For this reason the landholder ought to have no unlimited and exclusive privilege in the purchase of his tax, though the terms will be such as to render it highly beneficial for him to become the purchaser himself. To enable him to take the benefit held out to him, every facility will be given him for raising money, and even should he lose the first opportunity of purchase, the redemption of the tax will not be hopeless. A period should be fixed at which he shall have the liberty to redeem, though on his refusal, a third party in the first instance has become the purchaser.

Such are the views upon which the plan is founded. As to the terms upon which the purchase is to be made, I shall explain them very shortly. Payment of the redemption will not be demanded in money, but will be received in transfer of stock to the commissioners for liquidating the national debt. This mode has the advantage of accommodating itself to the fluctuation of stock, and each transaction liquidates itself. The present price of three per cents being about 50, affords an interest to purchasers of six per cent. At this rate stock sells at from 16 to 17 years' purchase, and the tax will be sold at 20 years' purchase. Every pound of annual tax, therefore, will be equal to 40*l.* capital stock. Should stocks rise to 75 the purchase will be 30 years, and the rate of purchase will thus vary one year with every variation of two and a half per cent in the price of stock. From this statement of the comparative purchase of the stock and tax, it is evident that the public gains one-fifth of the purchase by the transfer of stock.

As far as the landholder is concerned, the question then is, whether 20 years purchase will present a sufficient inducement to redeem, and whether 20 years be a sufficient advantage for what he parts with at 17 years purchase. This rests wholly upon the supposed difference between landed and funded security. Landed property in general throughout the kingdom sells at from 28 to 30 years purchase; funded at present from 16 to 17. We are giving landed security for funded, and at the rate of 20 years purchase. At this rate the share of advantage to the public is small, to the individual it is very considerable, if the advantage purchased is con-

sidered of the same description as landed property. I do not say, however, that it is exactly of the same description as landed property; they are to be distinguished by their respective advantages and disadvantages. The benefit to the purchaser by redemption is less valuable than landed property in this respect; it is dry and unimprovable possession. Land, however, is improvable, and it sells not only on its present value, but on the calculation of progressive improvement and speculative advantage. Other temptations to the purchase of land are command, influence, amusement, pleasure, occupation, according to the temper and disposition of the purchaser. It cannot be said, however, that the purchase of this benefit is rendered more valuable by any of these advantages. It should be recollected at the same time, that the purchase of the tax, if not absolutely the acquisition of enjoyment—if not a freedom from vexation, is freedom from something which a man would wish to be without. It has this advantage too, that if not susceptible of improvement, it is attended with no risk. The purchaser is exempted from the care of management and the trouble of collection, and taking all the advantages and disadvantages together, it may be considered as a purchase of a very desirable nature. While the owner is thus induced to become the purchaser, the public, as we have seen, derives a very considerable benefit from the transaction.

The next part of the plan is, to give a facility to the possessor of land also to become a purchaser. For this purpose it is intended to give the tenant for life or in tail, the same power to raise the money by burthening the property as proprietor in fee, provided, however, that the money so raised shall be strictly applied to the purchase of the tax. It is even intended to allow them to give a rent charge upon the property to the amount, if convenient, to increase the facility of the possessor becoming the purchaser. It is likewise proposed to give the proprietors of settled estates power to sell such a portion of the estate as shall enable them to pay off the purchase of the tax, providing that the money shall be strictly applied for that purpose.—Giving these facilities to the possessor to become the purchaser in the first instance, it appears necessary to fix a certain period, after which, if they decline, third parties may buy. To these the terms shall be the same as to the

owners. Landholders, however, are to have this superior advantage, that five years shall be allowed for the payment of the instalments. At the same time, however, if they shall avail themselves of this indulgence, they shall pay interest on the instalments, in order to compensate to the public for the non-extinction at this period of the purchase. Purchasers, not owners, are to pay up their instalments within one year.

It is necessary, therefore, in order to call the means of resource thus furnished into action, to take third parties where the landlords decline. That the situation of such third parties may not be too precarious, and that they may not be too easily divested of the property they have acquired, some provisions must be adopted by which they may be secured, and at the same time the power of redemption preserved to the original owner. It is difficult exactly to say what medium will balance the right to be given to these two parties, which will present to the monied men the temptation to buy, and reserve to the owner the power of redemption. The monied man must be induced to purchase by the difference which he supposes to exist between funded and landed property. This difference is greater or less according as the times are critical or tranquil. Land does not vary in time of war in the same proportion as funded property. Those who make a distinction in the value of land, do it upon its being less liable to fluctuation, and not upon any circumstance affecting the permanent value of stock. If then a third person shall purchase, the owner shall not be at liberty to redeem till a period arrive when the monied man shall be willing to return his money into stock, and the landholder shall have the means of raising money for his redemption. This period will be at the happy moment when, having surmounted the difficulties with which we have to struggle, and triumphed in the contest in which we are engaged, the consolidated fund shall have attained its maximum, and being no longer allowed to accumulate at compound interest, the dividends shall be made applicable by parliament. This will be when the consolidated fund shall be 4,200,000*l*. Supposing then that by the exertions which we have made, and continue to make, we should go through the difficulties we have to encounter, and pass with success through this crisis of our fate, when the

public debt shall be met by the consolidated fund there must be an end of all doubt of public credit; there must be an end of all question of national securities, of all distinction between landed and funded property.—That moment, then, when least discouraging for the monied man to revert to the funded security, shall be fixed for the owner to avail himself of that redemption which circumstances had at first made impossible. If not redeemed within a given time, however, it becomes material to render the property permanent with the purchaser, to the exclusion of the owner. Three years, then, after the expiring of the ten years, at the close of which the power of redemption is permitted to the owner, seems to be a fair extension of the privilege. It would give to the owner an opportunity to purchase, of which, from his circumstances, he was unable to avail himself on the first offer.—It will give him time for preparation for domestic arrangements, and for raising the necessary funds. Thus no party will have reason to complain of his situation. Provisions are made to secure to each the advantages which he will be most likely to prefer. In the transaction, the situation of the monied man is precisely this. During a period of difficulty and danger, he has got a landed security instead of that of the funds. This case, however, will require two regulations; first, that if any person, not the owner, has purchased by the transferring of an annuity, he shall be paid the same quantity of stock upon the redemption, which he had transferred without regard to the price of such stock. Thus, supposing he had transferred to the public in payment when stock was at 50, and in the interval it should rise to 75, he will derive all the advantage from the rise, and may thus realize fifty per cent upon his capital. At the same time he is to have no risk in case of a depreciation of the funds. Should they fall below 50, he is to be reimbursed to the extent of the difference. The situation of the stockholder who becomes a purchaser of the tax is precisely this, that he is speculating upon a rise without any hazard of loss from depreciation.

I have stated these points to show the general tendency of the measure. It will now be seen, that it is liable to no general objections which do not admit of a remedy; that the difficulties in the detail are not such as to impede its progress; that the advantage to the public is consi-

derable, and the benefit accruing to the individual such as will render it an object for him to purchase. While the monied man is induced to come forward to assist the state by purchasing the tax, a remedy is reserved to the owner, to enable him, at a fixed period, to repair the disappointment he may have sustained from his original inability. A variety of details must be involved in a measure like the present, but there are none which appear to be attended with great difficulty. On the present plan of repartition, the amount of particular districts remains unaltered, though it may vary within the district, with the improvement or decline of the various parts. In the metropolis and considerable towns this is particularly the case. In the parish of Mary-la-bonne the extensive improvement has rendered the repartition lighter, while in other districts it may become heavier from an opposite cause. Provision, therefore, must be made for the situation of an owner purchasing in the different cases of increase or decline. The most advisable regulation certainly would be, that of leaving it to the option of the owner, whether he will redeem it at the present price that shall be offered to him, or take it according to any future assessment to which it may be subject; the augmentation on which, as it is intended to be proportioned to the present local inequalities in the land-tax, will nearly produce the same effect as if that impracticable plan of a general equalization was to be adopted. But in case of a third person purchasing a part of this tax, he shall be entitled to receive an abatement proportioned to the fund which he may give in exchange for the tax. Therefore it will be extremely material to consider who the purchasers are to be; whether the land-owners, or other persons not having any property in the land; to see what circumstances may belong to particular places, and whether there may not be a great surcharge in some parishes, and none in others. But it is not necessary for me now to enter into those minute circumstances, which may be better discussed when the business shall come before the House for its consideration, and which will be introduced by way of regulation into any bill that may be brought in, if the House shall agree to the resolutions I mean to bring forward. It would also be desirable to allow a person to purchase not only a certain portion of the tax, but a given share of a district.

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These are the circumstances of the case which I have to lay before the House, and which I have conveyed in as short a statement as I was able. The object is one which requires consideration. In the first opening of the matter I avoided going into any minute detail; and although I feel it a matter of propriety in the outline, and such as deserves at least a favourable hearing, yet I wish it to be examined carefully, weighed dispassionately and deliberately, and that parliament may consider, whether it is not such a measure as they ought in their wisdom to adopt at this arduous moment. I shall follow the practice I have observed in other instances with respect to the form of proceeding; that of moving the first resolution, and afterwards all the others in point of form, and then postpone the consideration of the substance of the plan to another day.—Mr. Pitt then moved his first Resolution, viz, “That it is the opinion of this Committee, that the several and respective sums of money charged by virtue of an act of the present session of parliament, intituled, ‘An Act for granting ‘an Aid to his Majesty by a Land-tax, for ‘the Service of the Year 1798,’ on the respective counties and places in Great Britain, in respect of the premises in the said act mentioned, lying within the same counties and places respectively, to be raised, levied, and paid, unto his majesty, within the space of one year, from the 25th of March, 1798, shall, from and after the expiration of the said term, continue, and be raised, levied, and paid yearly, to his majesty, his heirs, and successors, from and after the 25th of March, in every year, for ever: subject, nevertheless, to the rules, regulations, restrictions, and conditions of redemption, to be prescribed.”

Lord *Sheffield* said, that the measure was the most extraordinary, the most rash, and the very worst that was ever proposed to parliament.

Mr. *Tierney* thought that the measure struck at the principles which were the foundation of our security in the possession of property, while, instead of raising, it would have a tendency to depress the public funds. Some gentlemen might, perhaps, run away with an idea, that this measure was for a redemption of stock, like that of the plan for a reduction of the national debt; but he denied that there was the slightest similarity between them. When stock should be purchased under

the provisions of the the plan now proposed, the stock would not vanish; the substance of the public burthen would be still the same. It was only taking eighty millions nominally out of Change-alley for a while, and to enable monied men to enlarge their capitals. The right hon. gentleman would gain nothing by this measure but a little temporary popularity with the monied men. And here he must repeat, what he had often observed, that the connexion between his majesty's ministers and monied men, of late years, had been too close, and led to measures highly injurious to the interests of the public.

Sir *W. Pulteney* did not hesitate to declare his opinion, that the chancellor of the exchequer, by adopting the plan now proposed, was going to make a very bad bargain for the country, and which, far from promoting, would tend to defeat the very objects he had in view.

The chairman reported progress, and the committee was ordered to sit again on the 4th. On which day,

Mr. *Buxton* said, he was of opinion, that the measure would be much more popular, if it contained a provision to the effect, that whenever any additional burthen should be laid upon the land, a tax to the same extent, should be laid upon every other species of property.

Mr. *Pitt* asked, how the hon. gentleman could ascertain the value of every species of property in the country? He had no difficulty in stating, that no greater service could be rendered to the country, than to point out the mode by which taxes might be laid, in the most equal manner, upon all kinds of property.

Mr. *Jones* thought that there was a wonderful inclination to favour the monied interest—"a set of people," according to the just description of them, by the immortal lord Chatham, "ready to serve any ministers, provided they served them on their own terms." This favour, shown to monied men, he could never contemplate without being reminded of the revolution in France; which was clearly to be traced to that preference and favour which had been shown to the monied interest, the loan-jobbers, contractors, and the rest of the swindling fraternity.

Mr. *Pitt* was surprised to hear it objected to the measure, that it tended to create a permanent burthen on the landed, in favour of the monied, interest of the country. It tended to create no new burthen, but only to continue a burthen al-

ready created. He took occasion to show the intimate connexion between the landed and monied interest, and that the prosperity of the one was the prosperity of the other.

Lord *Sheffield* could not agree with those who considered the land tax already in effect as a fixed and perpetual tax. If the chancellor of the exchequer had proposed, that the tax, in future, should fall on the occupier of land, he would have had a much better opinion of his principles of finance; for, by such means, the tax would ultimately fall on the consumer, and would be paid by the land-owners, in common with the rest of the community. But this was such a favourite tax, that, he understood, as soon as it was sold, there was an intention of laying a new land tax. Unfortunately for the country, those whose odious task it was to propose taxes did not always extend their knowledge beyond the bills of mortality. They were too much in the hands of monied men, who were so full of expedients, relative to the funds, that they could seldom think of the interior circumstances of the country. At the moment of such oppression on the landed interest, the most partial, the worst principled tax, and which solely respected them, was to be selected, voted perpetual, and then offered for sale, and that at a moment when a great part of the landed interest paid six times the other usual taxes. The country gentlemen who had no income, except from land; and who, from their situation, must incur a certain expense or fly the country, were crushed by the load of taxes. Parliament should take care not to drive gentlemen from the country. The disposition which the English gentlemen had to reside in it was infinitely advantageous. Their attention to the distresses and morals of individuals did more than the best laws ever did, and where no law could touch. Nobody acknowledged the necessity and difficulty of getting money more than he did; but there was a choice even in difficulties, and there were some good expedients left. He should mention one, the sale of the forests and Crown lands. Instead of a loss, it would be a great national benefit, if, by any means, they could become private property.

Sir *Gilbert Heathcote* wished to know, whether, if a new land tax was to be raised, it was intended to be fairly and equally assessed?

Mr. *Pitt* replied, that the House would

see that among the resolutions which he last night had brought forward, there was a provision, that the lands, on which the tax should be redeemed, should be discharged from any tax, other than such as should be imposed thereon in proportion to the annual value of the same in common with all other property of the same description.

Mr. *Harrison* wished that the House should not go into a committee, under the impression that the measure was not an additional charge on land: it was certainly so, to make that perpetual which before was only annual.

Sir *W. Pulteney* said, that if the landed interest could buy up the land tax at twenty years purchase, as proposed, then they would act as monied men, and it would not affect them as landholders. This, however, they could not be supposed to do. They had not, in general, the means of coming forward to make such a purchase, and were, therefore, precluded from deriving any of the benefits from it which were said to be attached to the plan. The chancellor of the exchequer himself confessed that his plan held out a tempting bargain. But, who were they who could take advantage of this tempting bargain? Were they not the monied men? And was it not, consequently, a decided preference given to them, over the landed interest? The only advantage that seemed to be derived from the plan, was, that, upon forty millions the public got one per cent. But this advantage was fully counterbalanced, by the conversion of the present land tax into a perpetual annuity; and, instead of taking out of the market a great portion of stock, this annuity of five per cent being irredeemable, would replace what was taken out originally by the purchase of it; and a perpetual, irredeemable five per cent stock would be thus established, to which the operation of the sinking fund could never be applicable. On the whole, sir William said, the plan very justly gave offence to the country gentlemen; that it would not be productive of either mediate or immediate good; that it was, moreover, a violation of the constitution, and that in a manner of which a bad minister might make a very bad use. He, therefore, hoped, that the landed gentlemen, and the House in general, would make a firm stand against it.

Mr. *Bastard* said, that this plan would decrease the value of land, and that he should not be surprised if that decrease

should be so considerable as to amount to four or five years purchase. It was a maxim of our jurisprudence, that no one part of our property should be sacrificed for the purpose of bettering another. By this measure, only one species of property was relieved, while another was burthened. He would say, that, before any private property was sold for the public service, the country ought to dispose of the public property. By this, he did not mean woods and forests merely, but a variety of other resources, which would produce a great deal more than this measure, besides taking off a certain proportion of the taxes. If this measure should be carried, the next measure would be another and another land tax.

The question for going into the committee, was carried, on a division, by 105 against 13, and the House resolved itself into the committee, in which the several Resolutions moved by Mr. Pitt were agreed to.

Debate on Mr. Wilberforce's Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.] April 3.

Mr. *Wilberforce* began by observing, that though the subject of the Abolition of the Slave trade was one, with which he had been so familiar, that there scarcely had seemed to be room for any new emotions, yet, on turning his mind more immediately to this great question, and fixing his attention more closely on the several particulars included within it, so many new and powerful feelings rushed into his mind, as almost to disqualify him for the cool and deliberate discharge of the duty he was now undertaking. Feelings of regret and pity—of surprise, shame, and indignation—these were excited within him but too naturally, when, placing before him the horrid circumstances of the cause he was about to plead, he recollected where, and before whom, it was that he was pleading it. That it was before that very House of Commons, which had acknowledged the reality of all the evils he had stated, and had resolved ere now to put an end them. It was a matter of solid comfort to his mind that, whatever were the various feelings the present occasion called forth within him, a feeling of remorse was not of the number. His conscience did not reproach him with having betrayed or neglected this important business; and it was because he was resolved to continue a stranger to this worst species of accusation, that he was

now about again to bring forward the question. After the conduct which the House had already pursued, he scarce knew how to hope or almost what to wish, but he was resolved on giving them one more opportunity of wiping away the foulest of all blots on their own character, and on the annals of their country. And first he must require the resolution to be read to them which had passed in May 1792, declaring that the Slave trade should cease from and after the 1st of January 1796. [This was read at the table accordingly.] The circumstances under which the House came to that determination were well worthy of remark. It was not a sudden resolution, hastily forced from them by the outraged feelings of humanity, but the result of a most diligent and laborious examination, by a committee, during a great part of three sessions of parliament. The reports of this committee were weighed, and scrutinized, and followed by long and repeated discussions within these walls. All the charges he had brought against the Slave trade were substantiated, and the substance of them acknowledged even by his warmest opponents. The Slave trade was proved to be the cause of long and extended wars between nation and nation; it produced innumerable acts of individual depredation. The petty chieftains were rendered the oppressors and ravagers of the very districts of which they were the natural guardians. A barbarous and sanguinary superstition was encouraged and cherished as a source of supply to the slave market; even the fountain of justice itself was corrupted, and that which should have been the parent of order and security, was made an instrument of rapine and desolation—all was turned into this great channel, and thus was sustained a system of more complicated wickedness and cruelty than ever before existed among men. He had formerly mentioned, and he must mention again, that most striking fact in proof of his assertion, that when two gentlemen employed by the Sierra Leone company had penetrated to a considerable distance inland, where the face of the white man had never been seen, the state of society was found more advanced by two or three centuries than upon the coast, where the natives had been in the habits of constant intercourse with the most polished nations of Europe for two or three hundred years. Thus the Slave trade was able to falsify and disprove the

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established maxim, that civilization always began on the sea coast, and gradually penetrated into the interior. What greater reproach could attach upon the British name, than that which this extraordinary fact brought home to us: which proved that our interference tended only to corrupt, darken, and barbarize, and that it must be the ardent wish of these African savages to be left unmolested in their native deserts, and not be cursed by our ruinous intrusion. What wonder was it then, that the House was unable to resist such a claim on their justice and humanity, made in favour of a fourth part of the habitable globe? Well did he remember, that even they who could not bring themselves to vote for immediate abolition, yet condemned the Slave Trade in the strongest terms of reprobation. Nor was it only to religion, and justice, and humanity that the appeal was made. His right hon. friend, with a minuteness of research and a detail of calculation, which enforced conviction on the most unwilling minds, established beyond dispute that the slaves actually in the islands were sufficient in number to ensure the population being maintained without any fresh recruits from Africa. But that argument, if not then complete, had surely since become so, and even they who contended that some additions to the population were necessary, could not deny that these had more than been supplied by the multitudes which had been brought from Africa from the year 1792 to the present period.

He saw but one objection which was likely to be urged against him with any force. The House, had last year addressed the crown, humbly requesting his majesty to send instructions to the governors of the West India islands, directing them to concert such measures with the different legislative assemblies, as by promoting the population of the islands might gradually render the Slave trade less necessary, and finally lead to its total termination. He might justly expect a bad reception from the House, if he should propose to rescind and reverse what was then agreed upon. But so far was this from being the case, that the very contrary was the truth. The measure adopted last year, without that which he was now bringing forward, would be illusory and unavailing; whereas associated with abolition, it would be efficient and complete. It must be self-evident, that the regula-

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tions framed by the colonial legislatures with a view to promote the population of the islands, would be inefficient in themselves. What were those regulations to be? Of course, injunctions and legislative provisions, prescribing the quantity of food, and clothing, and labour, and medical care, and religious instruction which the slaves were to receive, the degree also of correction the master should be allowed to exercise. But was it not obvious, that different proportions of all these would be required according to the different situation and circumstances of the estates? For instance, a gang which had plenty of provision ground allotted to them, would want a smaller allowance of corn, and *vice versâ* a gang which was weakly, could perform less work, whereas from one which consisted of strong and healthy negroes a larger quantity of work might reasonably be required. Again, as to medical care and religious instruction—different estates would call for different regulations according to their respective circumstances. And, lastly, as to correction and punishment, the degree of these which would be necessary, would vary according to the previously existing state of discipline, according to the good or bad disposition of the slaves, and their consisting of more or fewer imported Africans. In short, it was obvious, that no set of regulations could be framed which would be universally applicable. Human laws cannot counteract the nature of things, or adjust with definite precision that which from its own nature is indefinite.

But not only was it impossible to devise a set of regulations adapted to the end in question, but if devised how could they be carried into effect? Let gentlemen put the case of similar rules being attempted to be enforced in the management of families in this country, and how difficult, how invidious would be the execution of them, much more, then, in a country in which the testimony of the blacks, seven-eighths of the community, not being admissible, it would be impossible to adduce evidence of the abuses which might really exist. But these regulations of which no human laws could secure the observance, might be carried into effect by rendering it the strong and manifest interest of every owner of an estate to attend to the execution of them. Were it once clear that no farther supplies were to be expected from Africa it would im-

mediately become the first concern of every owner of an estate to maintain and increase its population. Here, then, a principle would be introduced, adapting itself to all cases, and varying with all circumstances; suiting itself to the situation, whatever it might be, of the owner of a gang of negroes and urging him more surely and more incessantly than all the positive laws in the world, to administer such proportions as might be needful of food, and clothing, and labour, and instruction, and punishment. This was not mere speculation, it was universally allowed that the situation of the slaves had been greatly improved of late years, and to what had this been owing, but to the expectation of an abolition taking place, which would render it necessary for them to depend henceforth on their own internal population. But on the ground that the abolition was to be postponed for an uncertain period, what inducements would the West India planters feel to lend themselves to the execution of the system which the colonial legislature should lay down for them? Considering how difficult and how invidious it would be to attempt to enforce the practice of these legislative provisions which would go to the interior of every domestic arrangement, was it to be believed that all this would be submitted to—For what? For the avowed purpose of accelerating the abolition of the Slave trade, an event which the West Indians in general have frankly declared they consider as in the highest degree injurious to their interests. This would be to suppose that men would subject themselves to a discipline which no assignable reward would be sufficient to induce them to undergo, for the sake of bringing upon themselves what they believe to be one of the greatest of all punishments.

The observations which he had just made were sufficient to prove that the legislative assembly in the West Indies, could not enforce the execution of such regulations, as they might prescribe, if they were ever so willing, and also that it could not be supposed they would make the attempt with any real cordiality. In all these speculations concerning the effect of any regulations operating in the West Indies, for the protection of slaves, gentlemen must bear in mind, that there was a certain *esprit de corps*, which varying in nature and kind, naturally belonged to every community. In the West Indies

it was a fellow feeling for the rights and authority of masters. Some curious proofs of this were afforded by the papers recently transmitted from the colonial assemblies. These were indeed extraordinary documents. The committee of the assembly of St. Christopher's, which, when the *esprit de corps* was in action for the defence of all the planters in general against charges never urged, but against individuals, maintained that all was perfect in their management; now, when it was no longer the object principally in view to state the general treatment of slaves as so unexceptionally good, that very assembly itself frankly declared, that the allowances of food usually given by masters to their slaves were too small, and that in short, the sense of interest, which used to be held up as fully sufficient to insure the slave abundance of every kind of necessary, was not powerful enough to induce the masters to feed and clothe their slaves so well as to enable them to go through their work with spirit. But the most striking illustration of this principle of the *esprit de corps*, was furnished by the returns from the island of St. Christopher's, with a view to proving that "the criminal courts of justice had always taken cognizance of barbarous treatment of slaves in the same manner as crimes of a similar nature committed against white men." In short, they frankly declared, that "it does not appear to them that any other laws are necessary for the purpose of protecting slaves against any persons who shall commit acts of violence or injustice towards them;" and then they bring forward their extracts from the records in proof of this opinion. But let these instances be a little scrutinized. The first and second are of two persons, prosecuted for acts of wanton cruelty, the one on a male, the other on a female slave, by cutting off their ears. The act of assembly, which was passed in 1783, expressly declares that "any owner or possessor of any negro, or other slave, who shall wilfully and wantonly cut out, &c. the tongue, put out, &c. an eye, slit the nose, ear, or lip, or cut off a nose, ear, or lip, or cause the same to be done, shall be fined 500*l.*, and imprisoned in the common gaol, for six months." But this theoretic penalty was not sanctioned by the practice of the courts, for in the two instances above-mentioned, which took place in June 1784, the delinquents being convicted,

were fined, the one 100*l.* the other 50*l.* and in neither case was there any imprisonment. But the third instance was a still more remarkable one, an instance of savage and wanton barbarity, rendered still more atrocious by its being committed against the helplessness of infancy. A man of the name of Herbert, gagged and dreadfully lacerated the mouth of a child of six years old, insomuch that its life was despaired of. He was prosecuted for the offence; the fact was undeniable, and curious indeed was the verdict of the jury: "Guilty, if immoderate correction of a slave by his master be a crime indictable." This, too, in an island, in which "the courts of justice had always taken cognizance of the barbarous treatment of slaves in the same manner as of white and free people!" Yet, in spite of this uniform practice, so strange, so novel an idea did it appear to the jury, that a master should be punished for cruelty to his slave, that they did not feel themselves justified in pronouncing sentence against a wretch who had thus disgraced his manhood. The court, which, to speak fairly, appears to have been desirous of doing its duty, pronounced, after taking time to consider, that this was a crime indictable, but the utmost punishment which they felt themselves at liberty to inflict was, a fine of 40*s.* currency, or about 30*s.* sterling. But the matter did not end here. This very Herbert afterwards brought his action against the provost marshal, for having taken the poor unoffending boy into his custody, partly that the child might be forth coming, partly to save him from the violence of his brutal master. The provost master was cast, and would have had heavy damages to pay, had he not got off on a point of law. Herbert was considered as a persecuted man; the persons who had prosecuted him were universally reprobated, and he himself became one of the most popular characters in the community. The fourth case was not much better than the preceding ones. But what he wished to press on the House was, that these cases were not selected by him, in order to prove that slaves did not enjoy the protection of equal laws; but they were cases transmitted by the assemblies themselves, as satisfactory evidences, that negroes enjoyed the same legal protection as white people. Was it possible for any thing to evince more clearly the force of

prejudice, or to show the impracticability of giving to slaves the security and comforts of a state of freedom? Both reason and experience rendered it unquestionably clear, that if the House should place its whole dependence, for the abolition of the Slave trade, on regulations to be enforced by the colonial assemblies, it would find itself fatally deceived. But, in addition to all this, let it be remembered, that the assemblies, and, in particular, the assembly of Jamaica, have always plainly acknowledged, that it was their object to go on importing until they should have brought into cultivation all their barren lands, amounting to more than twice the number which are now cultivated.

He would now shortly touch on another argument, which he had before had occasion to urge, and to which every year brought fresh weight. He alluded to the extreme danger of insurrections, and to the new grounds of apprehension, which were laid in the emancipating system introduced by the French into their islands. Was it possible for any to be so infatuated as not to be desirous of preparing for that change of system, which, by gentle or by violent means, must ere long take place, and towards which the first step must be, to stop the farther importation of slaves from Africa? Could we be weak enough to believe, that our islands would remain in their present state in the vicinity of the French islands, in which the slaves are relieved from all the galling marks of inferiority? He declared solemnly, that he anticipated the most fatal consequences from persevering in their present course of annually importing fresh combustible matter, when all was already but too near to an explosion. He washed his hands of the blood which should be spilled. More than once he had warned them of their danger; but, as an Englishman, also, and as a member for a great county, he felt it his duty to object against the continuance of a system which annually called upon his constituents to expend their blood and treasure in order to sustain it. He had been at the trouble to inquire into the number of slave ships, which were taken on their passage from Africa to the West Indies. The cargoes, as they are called, of all these, are carried by the French to some port in their islands, where they are made free, and trained as soldiers. The number was considerable: in 1796, there were above 3,000 of these; in 1797, above 1,700; and thus we carried on this

system of wickedness and cruelty, the Slave trade, in order to furnish the enemy with the best instruments they could employ for the subjugation of our islands, and against whom we should have to wage unequal war in a climate which would continue to prove, as it had been, the grave of our brave countrymen.

There was another consideration which he would briefly press, particularly on those gentlemen who had been the most forward in condemning the wild theories of France, and her pretended rights of man. Sorry he was to recollect that he had been deserted by any of that description. Above all others, they were bound to show, in an instance like the present, that their zeal against French principles was not an indiscriminate repugnance alike to every species of innovation, however founded in justice and required by mercy; was not an indisposition to acknowledge and respect what were the real unquestionable rights of human beings. This was a period when it was surely desirable that the House of Commons should enjoy the confidence and good opinion of the nation at large and in no way could they so effectually consult their own credit, as by wiping away this foul stain from their character. There were many other considerations which he might adduce, but there was one which he could not omit, and with which he would conclude: it had been forcibly stated in the petition, which he had that day presented from a body of respectable men (the Quakers) whose unwearied efforts in this great cause did them the highest honour. Was not this a time, was not the nation now in circumstances, in which all who had any belief in the superintending providence of God, must feel desirous of averting his displeasure, and conciliating his favour? But what else was this Slave trade, which we so obstinately maintained, in the teeth of every principle divine and human, but practical atheism? In cases of this nature, we were apt to be the dupe of names. We were shocked at the impiety of the French, in bowing the knee to the goddess of Reason; but what else were we doing but worshipping, not indeed the god of reason, but a still baser idol, the god of gain; and though we withheld the posture and external forms of worship, yet we paid to our mammon the more substantial service of the heart, sacrificing and surrendering at its shrine every religious and moral obligation which had ever been

acknowledged among men. Surely we could not but dread the vengeance of an insulted Providence; not that this was, perhaps, to be expected in any sudden manifestations of his power,—in tempests, in earthquakes, or in hurricanes. But the Supreme Being had so established the course of human affairs, that imprudence was generally followed with misfortune, and wickedness by misery. Let us not then flatter ourselves, that we can alter this arrangement, or change the order of the moral world. If, in times like these especially, we have any sense of the value of the favour of heaven; if we have any sense of what is due to our own character and honour; if we have any feeling of justice and humanity, let us no longer hesitate to do that which has been too long delayed, but embrace the opportunity which is afforded us of rescuing a great continent from the destructive ravages to which it has been doomed for centuries by our selfishness and rapacity. Mr. W. then moved, “That leave be given to bring in a bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, at a time to be limited.” The question being proposed, “That this House do now resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to consider of the said motion,”

Mr. *Bryan Edwards* said:—Before I proceed to reply to the arguments adduced in support of the motion, I beg that the clerk may read the address of this House to his majesty of the 6th of last April, which the hon. gentleman alluded to, but declined reading. [Clerk reads.] —I have called your attention to this address, Sir, because it demonstrates beyond the possibility of contradiction, that the measures recommended thereby to the colonial assemblies, were not merely measures of subordinate regulation in the system of existing slavery, but such as, if adopted, will certainly effect (gradually and progressively I admit) the utter extinction of the Slave trade itself. Sir, the gentlemen who supported that address urged the necessity of that mode of proceeding on two grounds? First, because the concurrence and co-operation of the colonial assemblies were considered as indispensably necessary to the attainment of the object in view. For myself, speaking from personal experience and local knowledge, I declared that the abolition of the Slave trade by the legislature of this kingdom alone, without the concurrence and against the consent of the colonial assemblies, was abso-

lutely impracticable. I thought so then, and I think so still. The second ground was this: We were of opinion that the colonial assemblies, if properly treated by this country, would willingly adopt such measures as should gradually restrict, and ultimately produce a total cessation of the trade. We did not indeed suppose that they would instantly and absolutely shut their ports against the farther introduction of African negroes: no, Sir, we knew that they would first duly consider the many weighty and complicated interests that are involved in the question (for example, those of tenants for life, lessees, mortgagees in possession, trustees and others) and make provision accordingly; but their proceedings, as we hoped and believed, though slow and temperate in their operation, would on that very account be more secure and efficacious in the end. Wishing most sincerely that the Slave trade was suppressed, but differing from the hon. gentleman in the mode of effecting its suppression, I supported the motion for the address, and majority of this House concurred in opinion that an application to the colonial assemblies, under the sanction and authority of the crown, was the only proper mode of proceeding, because it was the only mode that could prove effectual.

Such, Sir, having been the sentiments and resolution of this House, and his majesty having graciously assented to the measure it naturally occurred to me, when I heard the hon. gentleman give notice of his intention to bring the Slave trade again under the consideration of parliament, that very unpleasant accounts had been received from the West Indies. I was afraid that the colonial assemblies had rejected the interference of this House, and refused to pay proper regard to his majesty's gracious recommendation. I supposed that the hon. gentleman therefore thought himself called upon, to attempt to do that for the colonies, which they refused to do for themselves. Now, Sir, what is the fact? The House has had laid before them the correspondence which passed between the secretary of state and the governors of the several West India islands containing the resolutions of the several assemblies of St. Vincent, Grenada, Antigua, St. Christopher's, and Tobago, on this occasion; and I put it to the hon. gentleman's candor, whether, in the short time they have had for deliberation, those assemblies have not done every thing that this House

had a right to expect from them? I beg leave, sir, to read the answer of the assembly of St. Vincent in their own words: "We shall most readily adopt every measure calculated to obviate the causes (if any exist) that have hitherto impeded the natural increase of the negroes already in the island; and shall be happy indeed, if we can devise such means and regulations that the Slave trade may be gradually diminished, and in time rendered totally unnecessary." Nearly the same, is the language of all the other islands, except Barbadoes and Jamaica. In the former, the subject was under consideration, and with regard to Jamaica, a bill was then before the Assembly for restricting the future importations of African negroes, by a heavy tax on all such as should exceed a certain age.

Sir, after this fair representation of the conduct of the colonial assemblies, it is not surprising that the hon. gentleman should persist in bringing forward a motion for an abrupt prohibition of the trade by the parliament of this country. What must the planters infer from such a procedure, but this either that the hon. gentleman is determined that, unless the measure of abolition is carried into effect by himself only, and upon his own terms, it shall not be carried at all; or that he has some other object in view, which he does not think proper in the present stage of the business, openly to avow. That object, Sir (as the planters suspect) is nothing less than to abolish not only the Slave trade, but the system of servitude which is established in the West Indies in consequence of it. The hon. gentleman thinks perhaps, that the planters have had the staff long enough in their own hands, and he now proposes to make them change situations with their own negroes. Sir, in the torrent of revolutionary ideas that overwhelm half the earth at this juncture, and every where loosen the foundations of society, I am not surprised that this wild project should be thought of. I confess, however, that I should not have suspected the hon. gentleman was any great admirer of French politics or French principles. Perhaps he considers their proceedings in emancipating the slaves, as an exception to their general conduct. If so, I can satisfy him that he is grossly mistaken; and that the only plea which can be offered for their proceedings in this case, as in most others, is that of downright insanity. For what else but insanity could think a race of ig-

norant savages, fit for the complicated relations of civil society, without some sort of previous instruction? Accordingly, most of the French negroes that availed themselves of the offer of freedom in the south part of St. Domingo, immediately fled to the mountains, where they will form hordes of Charibes, and from thence pour down upon the white settlers. In Gaudaloupe where they have no such places of retreat, the negroes were compelled to enlist as soldiers; but not finding this sample of French freedom to their taste, they have generally requested that the ancient system may be restored. In some cases this has been done. In others, the poor wretches, not making good soldiers, have suffered military execution and been shot by scores, as an example to the rest. The hon. gentleman has repeatedly declared that his plan is merely to stop the farther influx of slaves from Africa, conceiving that, by this measure, the planters will be induced to husband their present stock, and by promoting their natural increase, render farther importations unnecessary. That such are his ostensible motives I admit; but of this I am certain that if his proposed bill be the same as that which he brought in two years ago, it will go much farther than he is aware of. The preamble of that bill states the Slave trade to be "contrary to justice and humanity." Now, Sir, if disregarding all considerations of expediency, we adopt this, and this only, as the principle of abolition, it applies as forcibly to existing slavery, as to the Slave trade itself; for if the negroes now in the plantations were originally reduced by inhumanity and violence to their present condition, it is surely equally inhuman and unjust that they should be compelled to continue in that condition a moment longer. I know not, Sir, in what manner the hon. gentleman can extricate himself from this dilemma, unless he admits that he has hitherto been grossly deceived as to the condition and treatment of the negroes in the British West Indies, and that no change in their situation is necessary. I blush for the hon. gentleman more than for the objects of his defamation, when I hear him quote two or three solitary instances of improper treatment of the negroes in a single island, and dwell on them as a just representation of the general behaviour of the planters throughout all the West Indies. But, Sir, the cases themselves prove nothing. The trial of Jordan, if I

mistake not, happened before the St. Christopher's act of assembly took place. How, then, can the hon. gentleman blame the judges for not enforcing a law which was not in existence at the time the offence was committed? In the case of Herbert the object of the man's cruelty was his own mulatto child, and the man was universally believed to be insane. Similar paroxysms of madness happen in every country under the sun. Even in this happy land of meekness, civilization and christianity, there are found wretches whom no laws, nor dread of punishment, can restrain from committing the most horrid acts of revenge and cruelty. Some years ago a woman named Brownrig, and her daughter were convicted of murdering an apprentice child in London with circumstances of most dreadful barbarity. God forbid, that the character of the whole nation should be estimated from instances like these!

With regard to the mode in which the Slave trade is conducted in Africa, and the effect which it produces on the natives there, I certainly did think that this constituted the strong part of the case, in the plea for immediate abolition. I was, for a long time, of opinion, that the African nations were involved in perpetual wars by the instigation of this traffic; and I made but little account of the objection that their chieftains would put their prisoners to death, provided they had no opportunities of selling them to the Europeans; because I considered that there would be no wars, when there was no trade. But, Sir, the veil which has long concealed the interior of Africa from our view is now removed. To the great advances in geographical knowledge which so honourably distinguish the present reign, must be added the discoveries which have been recently made in that immense continent, under the sanction of the African association. A missionary sent by them three years ago to explore the interior country by way of the Gambia, is just returned from thence, after having penetrated 1500 miles towards the East, and visited nations and kingdoms unknown even by name to the geographers of Europe. With this enterprising traveller, Mr. Mungo Park, I have had much conversation; and the minutes of his journey are now in my possession. He gives an account of the natives very different from that of the hon. gentleman. He found the whole body of the people in all parts of

Africa in the condition of absolute slavery, and the country itself every where divided into petty states, which are perpetually engaged in wars with each other. That many of these wars arise from causes to which the Slave trade can no way contribute, Mr. Park asserts of his own knowledge. In proof of this, he relates an instance which came under his own observation. Soon after he had passed through a kingdom called Kasson, the king of that country died; and the succession being disputed by his two sons, the youngest prevailed, and drove his elder brother from the country. He fled to a territory called Kaarta, where Mr. Park then was; and being pursued thither, the Kaartans took up arms. In this contest, several towns were destroyed, and a vast number of prisoners taken on both sides; and now, Sir, we shall discover what effect the slave trade produced. The king of Kaarta made it a constant practice to put all his male captives to death. He caused them to be brought before him, and had their throats cut in his presence. On the other hand, the king of Kasson having received information of the French traders on the Senegal river, spared the lives of the captives made on his part, and sent them thither for sale. On this occasion, at least, the Slave trade promoted the cause of humanity; for it can hardly be doubted that the king of Kasson's prisoners would have shared the same fate as the others, if avarice had not prevailed over revenge in the mind of their savage king. I may be told, perhaps, by gentlemen who make no distinction between civilized and savage life, first, that the king of Kasson had no right by the laws of nature to sell his prisoners; and secondly, that the purchasers had no right to reduce men to slavery, for having redeemed them from death. Sir, I am not now disputing about abstract propositions; I am stating an instance of practical and positive good resulting from the slave trade. The prisoners of which I am speaking were in the condition of absolute slavery in their own country, before they were led to war; and if the question had afterwards been put to them, whether they would consent to go to the West Indies, in a milder servitude than that to which they had been accustomed, or have their throats cut in their own country, I believe they would not have hesitated in giving answer.

It is said, that the negroes already in our plantations are in number abundantly

sufficient to keep up the present cultivation, and it is therefore concluded, that if the planters were satisfied with their actual possessions, and would relinquish the fond ambition of settling new estates, no farther importations from Africa would be wanted; the present annual decrease in their slaves being wholly owing to their own misconduct. Sir, I deny the fact. I will not, indeed, affirm that an estate cannot be found, here and there, in every one of the sugar islands, on which the negroes are kept up by natural increase: some plantations are certainly in more favourable circumstances than others; but speaking of all the islands collectively, and Jamaica particularly, I maintain that it is utterly impossible the present existing black population can be supported without fresh recruits from Africa. The importations into Jamaica for the last twenty years have been five males to three females. With such disproportion in the sexes, added to the practice of polygamy, common to all the African nations, it is preposterous to impute blame to the planters for the present annual decrease. It is impossible that a decrease should not happen under such circumstances. The best and only way to remedy the evil, is to admit a limited importation, and by a judicious system of taxation, correct the disproportion in the sexes in future, diminishing the importations by degrees. The trade in such case will terminate of itself in a few years, and the planters will provide accordingly. In the mean while, exertions should be made to reform the manners of the present race of negroes, and improve the minds of the rising generation. By a system of this kind, they will progressively be weaned from their present licentious habits of life, and be taught to discard many barbarous superstitions unfriendly to population. All this may certainly be done; and I rejoice to say, that many of the colonial assemblies (whose province it is) are now devising regulations for this purpose. This, Sir, is to do real and substantial good, both towards the planters and the negroes. Every thing else is impracticable mockery. Supposing, however, for a moment, that it were possible to maintain the present stock of negroes without farther importations, and that the present cultivation in the several islands could be kept stationary, what is to be done with the present uncultivated territory in St. Vincent and Jamaica? Are the Charibe lands to

continue in their present neglected state, that new hordes of savage enemies may find shelter there? Are fresh armies of Maroons to be raised up in the wilderness of Jamaica? These are serious questions, which the chancellor of the exchequer would do well to consider before he prescribes limits to cultivation in those islands; by withholding all farther grants of land. The time, Sir, in which we live will constitute an awful period in the history of the world; for a spirit of subversion is gone forth, which sets at nought the wisdom of our ancestors and the lessons of experience. Those ranks and gradations which constitute the strength and the ornament of society are every where broken down; and the lowest of mankind are raised to a level with the greatest, the most virtuous, and the most enlightened. In such a conjuncture, the hon. gentleman comes forward, and proposes measures which in their consequences will raise the standard of rebellion in the West-India islands. He tells the poor innocent negroes, that they were unjustly and inhumanly brought into their present condition, and of course that they have nothing to do but to murder their masters, and plant the tree of liberty on their graves. Sir, it is a tree whose roots are steeped in blood, and whose branches drop poison. The planters, I admit, are an insignificant body, and may easily be crushed; but I will tell the hon. gentleman, that if he proceeds he will raise a consuming fire, which will not be extinguished until both classes are exterminated. That there are fanatics in this kingdom (I do not say in this House) on whom these considerations will have no effect, I do believe; but I think better of the hon. gentleman, and trust, that when he finds his motion rejected, he will not again press it on the House.

Mr. Canning said, that if there ever hung any doubt or hesitation upon his mind with regard to the propriety of the vote which he should give on the present question, that doubt, or that hesitation was now completely done away, and his opinion on the subject was now fully confirmed by the speech he had just heard. Indeed, as far as he had turned his attention to the nature of the Slave trade, he had uniformly been convinced of the beneficial effects that must result from its abolition. The same sentiments which prevailed on this subject in his breast, must likewise, he believed, sway the feel-

ings of every youthful mind whose sensibility remained unblunted; but were he to look for the real sentiments of those who countenanced this trade in the speeches they delivered in its support, he must, however reluctantly, regard them as the effusions of a heart very differently organized. This observation it was not his intention to apply to the hon. gentleman. The sentiments which he reprobated had been expressed in this House before that hon. gentleman had a seat in it; and of his humanity he could not be suspected to speak disadvantageously, as there appeared in his various writings, which did equal honour to his head and heart, frequent and forcible sentiments of the most refined humanity. In his speech however, of this night, it was with sorrow he perceived that this sentiment was far from being predominant. In this speech the hon. gentleman had laid down two propositions which he (Mr. C.) was very anxious should be clearly understood by the House, for if there were those who entertained any doubt respecting the propriety of an immediate abolition of the Slave trade, such would do well to consider whether by acceding to these propositions, they were not going to vote nothing short of a complete perpetuity of that trade. What was the drift of these propositions? Did they not hold out to us, that as long as there was a market for slaves, there would be found buyers; that as long as Africa would furnish negroes, there would not be wanting other countries to purchase them? Not only has the hon. gentleman explained how this was the case, but he has explained why it must be the case. This he enforced by papers which appear to be almost exclusively in his own possession, and from which he drew a very pathetic picture of the interior of Africa; which, though it bore no little appearance of being overcharged, could not, however, fail of being powerfully affecting. He there holds out to our indignation, the wanton cruelty of some African prince, who, after gaining a battle, deliberately, and in cold blood, issued an order for cutting the throats of all the captives. This specimen of the cruelties to which the miserable Africans were exposed, was seemingly, in the opinion of the hon. gentleman, some apology for the continuance of the Slave trade; and, under that persuasion, he, with an air of triumph, put this question to the House, whether placing themselves in the

condition of that unfortunate people, they would not prefer being sent to the West Indies, to having their throats thus barbarously cut at home? However forcible the hon. gentleman might think this appeal to the feelings of the House, the species of argument it held out, he must, at least confess to be rather general. For my part, (continued Mr. C.) were the question put home to me—whether I would finish my existence in my native land, or be sent in slavery to the West Indies, where I might, at the caprice of a tyrant master, be ignominiously maimed and miserably mangled; much rather would I perish at home, in the shocking manner described by the hon. gentleman, than yield up my liberty and expose my person to such cruel and outrageous indignities. Neither could he easily perceive the force of the argument which this picture was introduced to illustrate: for did the hon. gentleman intend to assert, that when the number of the sexes was equalized among the negroes in the West Indies, the king of Kasson would cease to indulge in this atrocious operation? And did not this mode of reasoning go equally to prove that what was now well would be always well, and that this argument might be brought in justification of the Slave trade, both now and after the period alluded to? This was in his mind an attempt to justify the continuance of this abominable traffic even after its supposed necessity should cease to exist. The hon. gentleman proceeded to urge the necessity of continuing the Slave trade as long as there remained uncultivated lands in our West India islands, and the impropriety of discussing the question of its abolition, until this object had been accomplished. Mr. C. said, he had learned, from undoubted authority, that a third of the lands in the islands still remained uncultivated. If, then, it had taken such a length of time to cultivate the portion of land which was now brought to that state, how much time must elapse before the remainder was duly cultivated. Gentlemen who viewed the subject in the light in which he saw it, could not hesitate for a moment as to the vote they should give; especially if they attended to the manner in which it was argued by the Coryphæus of the West Indies; for it was deliberately pronounced by him, that the slave trade must be continued as long as there remained any land in our islands uncultivated, or as long as

it proved a blessing to the subjects of the king of Kasson. Those who did not distinctly disclaim those two grounds for supporting the farther continuance of this trade, could never persuade him that they had ever been sincere in their wishes for its abolition.

Mr. *H. Thornton*, paying all due respect to the testimony of Mr. Park, read some passages from governor Macauley's journal, respecting the manner of procuring slaves in the Mandingo country (into a part of which Mr. Park had travelled, and where Mr. Edwards seemed to assume that no enormities were committed, originating in the Slave trade), from which passages it appeared that kidnapping is very frequent, both among the Salees and Mandingoes. Nor was it strangers alone that were kidnapped: it often happened that children were kidnapped by people of a neighbouring, or even the same village. Mr. Thornton proceeded to describe the four sources which supplied the slave market: wars, crimes, debts, and kidnapping. Abundant evidence had been furnished at Sierra Leone, that wars were both promoted and prolonged by this traffic. The prisoners taken in every war furnished, when sold, the funds for prosecuting it. And the war itself was often undertaken purely for the sake of making slaves. In the Teembo country, into which Mr. Watt and other servants of the Company had penetrated, it was acknowledged by a native chief, that though the Mahometan religion was the pretence for war, want of slaves to sell was the true motive. There also the prisoners taken, when too old for the market, were actually put to death. The hon. gentleman had said, that the abolition of the Slave trade would cause many Africans to be murdered, since there would be no sale for the prisoners of war: but, on the contrary, it appeared that, in that country, the Slave trade not only produced the war itself, but was chargeable also with the deaths of all the unsaleable part of the prisoners taken. The servants of the Sierra Leone company had taken pains to learn what would be done with the unmarketable slaves, in case the trade should be abolished; and, as far as their information went, there was no danger of their being put to death. Many suspensions of the Slave trade had been occasioned by European wars and other causes, and then no slaves had been put to death. In some cases it had been expressly stated, that the slaves on hand at the time of such

suspensions had been set to work. He by no means supposed the Slave trade to be the only source of war in Africa. What he asserted was, that the Slave trade increased that barbarism, and totally obstructed all attempts at civilization; and farther, that it was, in many instances, a direct cause of war.—On the subject of slaves sold for crimes, said to have been committed, as far as information from Sierra Leone went, not one appeared to have been convicted with even the semblance of justice. The crimes of which they were commonly accused were witchcraft and adultery. Witchcraft was charged on some one or other at the death of almost every chief. The accused was obliged to drink the red water, a poisonous mixture so called. If he died, his relations were often sold for slaves. If the wretch survived and exhibited certain symptoms, he was himself sold. There were instances in Africa of English slave traders encouraging this iniquitous mode of trial. The persons sold for adultery, of whom he had heard, had been always sold, without any open trial, by the husband, who acted as accuser, judge, and jury, and himself got the whole profit of the sale.—With respect to the case of slaves sold for debts, there was no source of the slave trade which more strikingly illustrated the enormity of the system. When a ship arrived on the coast, the great object of the captain was to get her quickly loaded. The detention of every vessel was expensive, and it was particularly so in the case of a slave ship. The cargo consisted of living beings, whom it was some expense to support, and among whom the danger of mortality increased in proportion to the time of their remaining on board. Every captain, therefore, in estimating the merits of a slave factor on the coast, considered chiefly the time in which he could dispatch a vessel. Large credits were given, with a view to obtain a quick loading; and there was no great risk run in giving this liberal credit; for, by the custom of Africa, if the debtor did not pay his debt, his person, and even the people of his town, might be seized until the value of the persons so taken should be equal to the amount of the debt. On this principle, the richer traders on the coast kept the inferior head men in subjection. They distributed goods among them; and, in case of an urgent demand from a slave captain, they seized, or threatened to seize, the inferior headmen, who,

in their turn, seized upon the people under them. On the same principle, the English slave captains themselves usually claimed a right to seize both chiefs and people of every description.—Of slaves procured by kidnapping, many actual instances had occurred at Sierra Leone. The practice of seizing for debts, must of necessity lead to kidnapping; for when any man was in danger of being seized, or actually was seized, for debt, he or his relations were likely to go out and kidnap some other person, in order to redeem the captive, or to save himself from captivity. Indeed the petty wars in Africa were often little else than kidnapping expeditions. When Mr. Watt and another servant of the company had penetrated above 300 miles into the country, they were applied to for the recovery of several persons missing, and who were believed to have been kidnapped, on their way down to the coast.—Mr. T. then spoke of the powerful obstacles to civilization which the Slave trade, in various ways, presented. It was obvious that, while there were factories who would take either slaves or produce from the natives who brought them down to the coast, no factory which purchased produce alone (as was the practice of the Sierra Leone company's factories) could have a fair chance of success. The native traders who brought both articles, would go to the factory where they could sell all their articles, and not to that where they could only dispose of a part. Add to this, that the profits on slaves was often very great. The Sierra Leone company, therefore, had had to contend with the slave traders on very unequal terms; nor in truth could they hope to succeed, till the slave trade should be abolished. The company had attempted to introduce a trade in produce with the remote Foulah country. The king had shown a great disposition to abolish the Slave trade, and to deal with the company in produce. That whole inland country had proved to be much more civilized than the coast. The people were employed in several manufactures; the children were regularly taught to read and write; and one of the towns visited by the gentlemen contained about 5,000, and another about 7,000 inhabitants; whereas, not a town even of 500 any where remained on the Sierra Leone coast. On the plain grounds of morality and justice, and on the principle of promoting the civilization of Africa, he should give his assent to the motion.

Mr. *Sewell* thought that the motion, if adopted, would go to unsettle the legal tenures by which the proprietors of West India estates held their possessions. Was the House prepared to take such a step without at the same time offering them adequate compensation? Such a measure would be unjust. It was not fair to challenge the colonies with an unwillingness to ameliorate the condition of the slaves; and gradually to abolish the trade. He believed the penalty of 500*l.* imposed by the colonial assembly on those who cut off the ear of a slave, to be greater than some penalties to be found in the old Statute books of this kingdom for similar offences. These assemblies had also enacted penalties on those who did not provide a sufficient quantity of provision for their slaves. He objected to the motion, as it went to counteract the addresses of last session.

General *Gascoyne* said, that immense loss to the revenue would immediately follow this motion if adopted. The moment was too critical to attempt to put into practice any speculative reforms. The House should consider whether it would indemnify those who would be sufferers, and the risk it ran of irritating the colonies, and of throwing the trade into the hands of our enemies.

Mr. *Buxton* thought that the safety of the colonies required the abolition of the Slave trade, for the negroes in our colonies could not be long continued in a state of slavery, when they saw those in our enemies colonies emancipated? The motion merely went to stop the fresh importation of slaves from Africa; and he thought it would redound to the honour of that House to put an end to the horrors of slavery.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—My hon. friend (Mr. *Edwards*) was pleased to assert, that the hon. mover was governed by a desire not only to abolish the Slave trade, but also to emancipate the slaves now in the islands. Who, Sir, that calls himself a man, does not ardently long to put as speedy a termination as possible to every species of slavery? We can only differ as to the time and the means of accomplishing so desirable a purpose. My hon. friend says, that this country cannot prevent her islands from being supplied with slaves from Africa. The trade will pass, says he, into the hands of other states, which will convey them clandestinely into our colonies. But, Sir, the British force,

if it cannot totally prevent an illicit practice of this kind, can certainly accomplish it in a degree. Should I, however, admit, that in a contraband way the planters could be furnished with as many fresh slaves from Africa, as at present, these dealers in human flesh would then sustain no injury by the abolition of the trade, and we should have effaced a foul blot from the national character in no longer giving the sanction of law to a branch of commerce, which violates the rights of humanity, and excites the abhorrence of every feeling mind. My hon. friend contends, that if we discontinue this traffic, the slaves in the islands will soon be in a state of general insurrection. The strongest evidence to the contrary is afforded by experience. An act of the British legislature against fresh importations of slaves, weakens not a single restraint upon the conduct of those already in the colonies. The vote of the House in 1792, produced no revolt of the negroes in the islands. The court of Denmark passed a law, that this trade should cease from the year 1800. Have we heard of any rebellion among the blacks in her colonies in the West Indies? Our present situation calls loudly for the immediate abolition of so scandalous a traffic. France, by manumitting her slaves and making them citizens has constituted a formidable body of freemen, terrible to her foes. These emancipated negroes have exhibited a most grateful acknowledgment for the liberty conferred upon them, in the performance of surprising feats of valour. To be a match for France in the West Indies, we must meet her with her own weapons; we must adopt, towards our negroes, the same line of conduct she has observed towards hers: we must follow her example. Abolish the trade instantly; and, if you regard the safety of your colonies, unite dispatch with prudence, in bestowing the blessings of freedom upon the slaves who are now employed in your islands.

Mr. Pitt said:—I agree, Sir, with my hon. friend who brought forward this motion, in the propriety of an immediate and total abolition, even for the safety of the West India islands themselves. Hitherto, without defending the principles upon which this abominable traffic proceeds; without justifying the cruelty and injustice with which it is attended, and the misery to which it gives rise; some have contended for its farther continuance, upon the ground that it was necessary for

the interest of the islands. In answer to this argument, at best but doubtful, we can now press the necessity of an immediate and total abolition, for the salvation of those very islands which, it was argued, such a measure would destroy. The colonial regulations never can produce those internal arrangements, or facilitate those preparations for the gradual abolition, while fresh importations continue to be made from Africa. It may perhaps be thought presumptuous, without any local knowledge, to assert so confidently what is necessary to give effect to the internal regulations proposed. But unless those who support the traffic can show that the danger is not rendered greater by the new importations, and that the internal tranquillity would not be disturbed by fresh incorporations, we must act upon our own judgment. The contemplation of future advantages sometimes makes men blind to present dangers. For some distant improvements, the gentlemen upon the other side overlook their real interest; and to favour the false calculation on which this principle proceeds, they would have us not only to overlook that very interest which, whether they see it or no, it is our business to guard, but that duty which, with the conviction we have upon the subject, we are bound to obey.—We are told to postpone the abolition till some future period; but we hear of no specific time at which the subject may be resumed, or when the cause of delay will cease to exist. We are told likewise that we ought not to intermeddle; that matters are in a fair train; and that by means of the regulations which may be expected, the period when the abolition may with safety take place will soon arrive. But what certainty have we that these regulations will be adopted at all, or that they will be attended with success in their application? When we see nothing proposed for the speedy, and scarcely any thing for the ultimate abolition, we should be cautious how we consent to any delay. One hon. gentleman contends that all the waste lands must previously be cultivated. Now, the quantity of uncultivated land in Jamaica is about two-thirds more than that already in cultivation. For this last part 250,000 negroes are required. For the cultivation of the other parts, 600,000 living at the same time, would be necessary. To procure this supply, it would be necessary not merely to import this number, but to continue importing till the

full number is completed. From a comparison of the importation necessary to make out the 250,000 employed in the present cultivation of this island, and taking into view the increased ratio of mortality in proportion to the number required, in order to give 600,000 negroes living at the same time, an importation of 1,200,000 is necessary. It is to be considered likewise, that this shocking sacrifice of human beings is not for the supply of enterprises long since undertaken, but for the erection of a new colony. If valuable considerations have been given with a view to cultivation, it certainly would be fair that the persons who proceeded upon this idea, should be reimbursed by the public to that extent, and to such a measure, I, for one, should have no objection. But supposing this plan of extended cultivation were to be adopted, let us take all the assistance of cultivation, and try to discover what period of abolition this postponement of discussion would be likely to give. The process is very simple. During the last 100 years the cultivation has been going on, till the number of negroes amounts in Jamaica to 250,000. Upon the calculation that with 600,000 negroes, a corresponding length of time will be necessary for the cultivation of the remaining two thirds, supposed capable of cultivation, the period of the final abolition, upon the hon. gentleman's plan, would be protracted for no less than 240 years! If this, then, is to be the rule by which the abolition of this horrible traffic is to be determined, I cannot but understand it as a declaration that it is intended to be perpetual, and must abandon all hope of the nation being ever freed from the guilt and reproach which its continuance involves.—It has been said, that as this traffic was encouraged by the legislature, the abolition would be unjust towards those who had acted upon the faith of the existing laws. It was well answered, that the legislature often bestows encouragement upon branches of commerce, which, in different circumstances, it is prudent to withdraw. It is said, that the measure of abolition would risk the existence of the West India islands. This assertion, however, is begging the question. It has been proved, that a regulation superseding the necessity of new importation of negroes, has been attended with the greatest advantage to cultivation and to produce. If, however, the abolition of the trade

would take away the existence of the islands, the colonial regulations, which are ultimately to effect the abolition, cannot be in train. But if preparatory measures can ultimately effect the abolition, it certainly can only be by adopting some internal regulations respecting the condition of the slaves, and putting some checks to the new importation, which would overthrow every attempt which could be made for their improvement. Any partial inconvenience which they might experience, ought not to weigh against the undisputed principle of abolition, and against the safety of the islands themselves, which must depend upon restricting new importations. I cordially concur in the motion, which is no less recommended by every moral duty, than it is essential to the interest and the safety of the West India islands themselves.

Sir *W. Young* implored the House to consider the West-India islands as an integral part of the British empire, and to pay that attention which was due to the body of West-India planters. Perhaps gentlemen were not aware how difficult was the situation of the colonial assemblies, with regard to the subject referred to their regulation. It was the prevalent opinion in the islands that the emancipation of the negroes and the abolition of the Slave trade would go together. He wished the House to reflect that calamities might happen, such as war, conflagration, disease, &c. to destroy the population of negroes belonging to an estate, without any remedy, if fresh importations were prohibited; and thus a fatal blow might be given to the property of the West-India planters; whilst that gradual system of meliorating their condition, which was pursuing in the islands, would have quite different effects. His opinion was, that the British legislature should wait a few years in order to see whether the measures now adopting in the West-India islands produced the desired effect.

Mr. *W. Smith* contended, that the shocking accounts given of these parts of Africa, where the Slave trade prevailed, were strictly true, and in nowise controverted by Mr. Parke. The Slave trade extended to many parts of the coasts of Africa, even to the shores of the Red Sea, and on some of the islands near the south-eastern coast, as had been proved from the accounts given by the late sir *W. Jones*, of his voyage to India. It was incumbent on the House to do their duty

in the first instance, by abolishing the trade; and he hoped that those in power, or those who took the lead in reforming the manners of the times, would not content themselves with comparatively trivial and paltry meliorations, but acquit themselves and their country of the crime of countenancing a system too execrable for the powers of human language to describe, and not to offer such an insult to the Almighty Being, as to imagine that such sacrifices as he alluded to, could propitiate them, while they connived at the continuance of this destructive and detestable traffic in the persons of their fellow-creatures.

Mr. *Henniker Major* referred to a letter formerly written by order of the king of Dahomey to the African company, which strikingly demonstrated the savage customs and deplorable state of Africa. In that letter the king averred, that the walls round his palace were built with the skulls of his enemies; and the fact was found to be true. Evidence had been given, that the slave trade tended, in a very considerable degree, to lessen this waste of human blood, and that the kings of the country, instead of slaughtering their captives, now sold them to the nations of Europe. They were conveyed from a country of barbarous superstition, to a land of civilization and humanity. In his opinion, therefore, the clamours against the trade were groundless.

Mr. *Charles Ellis* was for restricting the importation to estates already cultivated. The demand for slaves was occasioned chiefly by the settlement of new estates. The restriction should apply to the exclusion of what was not necessary to keep up the number; but for some time there would be a deficit, and the supply for a limited time therefore could not be refused. Compensation should be given to those who had paid a valuable consideration for grants of new lands. To attain the end proposed, conciliation would be better than severity; and conceiving that colonial regulations would be more effectual, he must oppose the motion.

Mr. *Fox* said:—The gentlemen on the other side are extremely anxious to have it understood, that there is but one opinion of the inhumanity, the injustice, and the immorality of the Slave trade, and that the only difference between us is, what is the best mode to abandon the guilt and iniquity in which we have been involved, and to return to the paths of justice.

Now, Sir, it might have been expected that, to those who feel as I do upon this subject, it would have been a satisfaction to know, that though the mode which we recommend is not approved, the principle itself is fully recognized. I confess, however, that my feelings are not those of satisfaction. They are those of deep humiliation. To me it is matter of shame and of lamentation, that we should be so dead to every sense of dignity; that the country should be so lost to every sense of virtue, so sunk in hypocrisy, that, notwithstanding we are so loud in sounding our detestation of the practice, we have not yet abandoned the course which we so unanimously condemn. We are agreed, then, upon the principle of the measure now proposed: ten years have elapsed since the atrocity of this detested traffic has been admitted. A British parliament has been fully acquainted with the guilt and the reproach with which the nation has been loaded; not two opinions exist upon the subject, and yet in all that time not a single step was taken till last year to remove the cause, and then all that was done was by way of recommendation to facilitate some points of regulation without any cessation of the immorality. If any foreigner were desirous to discover a subject of invective against this country, like those invectives which we have in this House sometimes heard pronounced against other countries, what topics of accusation could he wish for more substantial; what articles of charge more relevant, than this simple fact, that for ten years after recognizing the enormity of the wickedness to which we are parties, we have persevered in it against our avowed conviction and our open professions?—But while they declare their disapprobation of the practice in words, some of those who oppose the motion seem by their arguments to consider it in a less culpable point of view. We are told that savage nations go to war with each other; that their prisoners are brought to market, and that as they are to be sold, it would be inhumanity not to purchase. As the mischief is done, say they, why may not we derive some advantage from it? If a passenger is to be robbed, why may not we be the first to plunder him? May we not conscientiously put the money in our pocket? We shall make the booty with less show of insult, of menace, or of cruelty, than usually accompanies such

crimes. We may, therefore, plead considerable merit. We have not done all the ill which we might have done, or which others in our situation would have done. Such are the arguments by which one of the greatest wickednesses by which a nation was ever disgraced, is palliated. They are mere savages, it seems; their princes either cut their throats, or gratify their avarice by sending them to market. We are then asked, is it not better for them to be sent to the West-Indies? This alternative, as was said by an hon. gentleman, is put too generally. They are sent to the West-Indies—but how are they sent? If we are to listen to theory upon the subject, in opposition to experience, an ingenious man may find abundance of specious arguments for selling all captives. Interest, it is said, is sufficient to induce kindness and good treatment. The answer is short,—all experience is against it. We know that such is the nature of man, that power leads to abuse, that the idea of possessing an unlimited authority, so far from inspiring tenderness, produces contempt of the object as worthless. Cruelty begets cruelty, and oppression breeds oppression, till the mind becomes hardened. Of this, all history, ancient and modern, affords proof. But, in mentioning the causes of the war, does the hon. gentleman (Mr. Edwards) say that Mr. Park informed him that the sale of slaves was not the cause? Was not the sale of slaves the reward of victors? Other causes of war may, no doubt, exist among the savages. I believe no man in these times will say that slavery is the only cause of war. Do we not know that ambition, revenge, hatred, and other bad passions, have been the causes of war? That not only in barbarous, but in more cultivated times, they have been the origin of bloody wars? Indeed, if the absence of these causes of war be the accusation, it must be confessed that hitherto we have not made very great progress. What, then, because hatred, ambition, revenge, are causes of war, is it nothing to add another powerful motive to war, that of avarice? Does no guilt attach to those who furnish this new principle of evil? May not this present an additional cause? Africa has ever been one of the most uncultivated parts of the globe. In Africa this traffic has, in some degree, prevailed at every period: the sale of human beings has been made an article of gain, and is this no impediment

to the advancement of knowledge, and the progress of civilization?

Another hon. gentleman tells us, that we ought not to be precipitate; that we ought to prefer measures of conciliation to measures of severity. Gracious God! Sir, what severity are we about to commit? We must postpone the subject! we must stay a little! What in the mean time is to be the fate of Africa? Are you to suspend the trade for two or three years, till you see whether an act of parliament be necessary to abolish, or will you trust to regulation in the West-Indies? Or, are you to stay a little, and send to Africa the scourges of war to promote the punishment of pretended crimes, the penalties of debt, and all the pretences by which men are made to forfeit their liberty? This is the conduct which this mild House of Commons must pursue! You must soften the West-India planters! How soften them? By an increase of the principles of humanity, by adding to their moral feelings? No! You must soften them by African blood, by the guilt of Britain, by the shame and reproach of this country. You must conciliate them, not by justice, by mercy, by kindness, but by an obstinacy in convicted guilt, and perseverance in acknowledged iniquity. Some of those who opposed the abolition of the trade tell us, you cannot abolish unless you emancipate. I say, that is an inconclusive assertion; but I say, if the consequences of our abolition of the African trade must be the emancipation of the negroes in the West-Indies, emancipation must take place.

I listened with attention to what fell from the minister in this debate, and I do say it is impossible to answer the arguments he urged in favour of the motion. He speaks always with great force, but what he advanced this night was of immense weight. He has told you plainly, I have no doubt truly, that the safety of the West India islands depends on your adoption of the measure now before you. I am not often in the habit of paying implicit deference to his assertions; but upon this occasion I have no doubt of the truth of what he said. Good God! who can doubt it? Why is his authority in this case less than upon others? I have seen that authority implicitly bowed to in this House on points infinitely less clear, on points infinitely less favourable to public freedom. Why then, if he is doubted in this, I must conclude that there is in this

House a system adopted that is hostile to liberty in general; else, why is that commanding eloquence, and that high authority, which is always successful in other matters, constantly defeated, and the public deprived of the advantages of its exertions in this cause? I am not saying it is owing to any want of sincerity in him. I am sure it is not owing to any want of talents in him; I am sure it is not owing to the want of exertion of his powers of eloquence; for I appeal to the many admirable speeches he has delivered upon all occasions which called for his eloquence; and I think I may say, he never distinguished himself more by eloquence upon any topic, than in his speeches against the Slave trade. Why, then, is that eloquence deficient in effect in this cause? How am I to account for it, unless there is a deliberate system in this House to discourage the principles of liberty? The right hon. gentleman tells you, and who can doubt his authority, that this question has become more urgent than ever; and that, unless this plan be adopted, your West India islands will be in imminent danger. I agree in every thing he has said upon this subject. With these feelings, what must I say to those, who, having acknowledged the injustice and the inhumanity of this trade—and who, after hearing the minister declare the colonies will not be safe unless this motion be adopted, nevertheless vote against it, rather than make a sacrifice of their interests, as they call it; but which I deny to be so, and will not do one act to mark their love of justice, or of virtue?—But we are told, that this motion is inconsistent with the address which we voted in the last session. I voted against that address, because it seemed to me to acknowledge, by a side wind, the necessity of the Slave trade; to which proposition it was impossible for me to assent. I wish this House to show to the world at large something like sincerity upon this subject. The French are abused for want of morals; they are abused for want of sincerity. I want to know what sort of sincerity this House will manifest by rejecting the motion which is now before it. I want to know in what book of morals, ever since justice and humanity have been treated of, we are to find that those who declare a traffic to be unjust and inhuman, act according to the principles of sound morals by continuing such unjust and inhuman traffic.

This is not all I have to say upon sin-

cerity in this measure. I thought I saw in some of the ministers, when this question was formerly debated in this House, an eager desire to blink it. I thought I saw in some of them a pretty keen desire to get over the odium of supporting the Slave trade; and that accounts to me for the measure which was then adopted, and by which a soft and tender mode of abolition is held forth, without sincerity. I ask, when will you abolish the Slave trade? Some gentlemen answer, when measures are taken abroad. Some say, in general terms, when the islands are cultivated. None of these gentlemen agree in any thing like a definite answer: each has an answer of his own, and each almost equally tending to a certain point, viz. to oppose the abolition of the Slave trade for ever. It has been insisted upon this night as an argument against the motion, that the disproportion between the sexes of the negroes being, they say, five to three of males to females. This, they maintain, is manifestly the case in Jamaica, and that it is quite unjust to persist in such a measure as this, without giving the planters notice. This they state with as much confidence and gravity, as if the subject had never been before this House. As to notice, let me ask, have they had no notice? Is ten years not a period sufficient to convey a notice? They have had that time, and lest it should have faded on their memory, they were reminded of it again in 1790, as explicitly as a vote of this House could tell them, that the Slave trade must be totally abolished in 1796. Two years have now elapsed beyond the time at which this House declared this trade should exist no longer. The question of notice cannot, therefore, be decently insisted upon. If it could, and that were the only objection to the present motion, I apprehend that those who oppose it ought, upon their own principle, to vote in its favour. What is the nature of the bill proposed to be brought in? Why, in its very nature, it must be a measure calculated to give them notice when the trade shall be abolished. What time do these gentlemen require by way of notice? Is it for twenty years; or is it until all their objections to the abolition of the trade be done away? If notice be the object, this motion is peculiarly adapted to that purpose. It will, however, be fair in me to say, that should the House give leave to bring in the proposed bill, I shall most certainly vote for the immediate abolition

of this trade. If the calamities of the country have made men seriously think of reforming in every kind of luxury in which they have been accustomed to indulge themselves—if we are to deprive ourselves of those little enjoyments which were not formerly held to be criminal—I say, if men are to hold forth uncommon austerity of manners, in trifling and insignificant points, I hope we shall not neglect the vital spirit of Christianity, which, I am sure, we shall do if we negative this motion. I am aware that nothing of a ludicrous nature should be brought forward upon this occasion; but I cannot help reciting the case of a man, whose name appears in the State trials during the reign of Charles 2nd. A man was tried for piracy, in the course of which trial it was proved, that he had been guilty of atrocious robberies, and the most cruel murder, and yet his mind was so strongly affected with certain ceremonies of religion, that he observed, as he went to the place of execution, “I know, I have been guilty of many wicked things, but there is one thing I can say, I never went to church without pulling my hat off.” I trust this country is not proceeding upon principles which every rational man must condemn, and adhering to vain punctilios instead of attending to the substance of religion. I do not believe there is a man in this House whose mind is so formed, as to lead him to conceive that his country is in such a situation that he can serve it by voting for a continuance of the Slave trade; and that he can show his piety to the world by taking care that he is not at the Opera-house after twelve on Saturday night, or be seen travelling on Sundays. I say, I hope no man will gravely think that the character of a nation for its piety, can be supported by these trifling external observances, while it submits to have upon its name a stain so odious as that of continuing a trade, declared to be founded on injustice and inhumanity. I say, that your little observances of exterior, will be so far from being an excuse for your real immorality, that they will be considered as an aggravation of your guilt; for by them you will add to your other sins, the deepest, the blackest, and the most odious quality in the human character, I mean hypocrisy.

I have now delivered my opinion upon this subject. I am not sanguine of success. I am well convinced that the minds of men, some of whom think themselves

enlightened, have taken a very contracted turn, with regard to questions of reform, and every thing that implicates the principles of public freedom. And here, I cannot help observing how some men catch at any thing which they think tends to serve their immediate purpose, although in reality it may make against it. Of this kind I take to be the observations that were made concerning rank, by those who do not wish the Slave trade to be abolished. Is this the way in which they defend the trade? Do they believe that the difference between a white master and a black servant is not sufficient to support rank without absolute slavery? I say, that slavery is not the way to support rank. The best way to keep up distinctions in society is, to remove that monstrous inequality, which makes one man an absolute tyrant, and another an absolute slave; and that the best security a state can have is in the consciousness of the people that they are free. Above all, the horrors of slavery should never appear. With regard to what has been said that we ought not to judge of the Slave trade, from the possibility of some persons having misconducted themselves in it, I own I am not satisfied. It is asked, did not Mrs. Brownrig and her daughter most cruelly destroy an apprentice? And it is from thence attempted to be argued that as we cannot control the passions of mankind we should make the same allowances for them as in other cases. To this I answer, it is because I know that man is capable of being a cruel, odious, and abominable creature; because I know how capable he is of acting frequently against his reason, and even against his most immediate interest, that I do not wish to see him possessed of that power and authority which can decide without control upon the fate of his fellow creature. If man were not cruel, slavery would never have been complained of in this world. Indeed if man were not cruel, slavery would not exist.

Mr. Windham said:—I agree with the right hon. gentleman in the result of some of his opinions, although I do not agree with him in the reasons which he has assigned for them. I do not wish to continue the Slave trade until all the uncultivated land in the West Indies shall be brought into a state of perfect cultivation. I have no hesitation in declaring, that if the question were now, whether the Slave trade should be immediately abolished,

or be continued until all the land in the West Indies should be cultivated? my alternative would be that of voting for the abolition. Having given this opinion, I will state another which I think I am bound to give, namely, Whether I should vote for the motion now before you, or leave it to the legislature of the islands, to whom by the last address of this House, it seems to me to have been entrusted? I own, that to leave it to their care seems to me to be the best mode that can be adopted. Much has been said upon the interior situation of Africa, I think that is a question not very material for us to view in discussing this matter. It seems to me to be equally unnecessary to say much on the horrors of the Slave trade, or on the general corruption and depravity which must necessarily attend it. These are points so clear that nobody has lately attempted to dispute them; and they are so glaring that they can hardly be overstated. But then comes the general question of the right hon. gentleman who spoke last: "Are you, after having acknowledged the injustice and inhumanity of the trade, to agree to its continuance?" Which he follows up by asking, "Are you to say I will rob, because another man will rob?" Upon this I cannot help observing, that however triumphant the mode might be in which these questions were put, and whatever may be the soundness of that right hon. gentleman's judgment, the instance he puts does not appear to me applicable to the measure now before you. I allow that inasmuch as example operates, each person concerned in the trade incurs some censure, because examples of this kind are not only in themselves mischievous, but have also a tendency to encourage mischief in others. I do not believe in the assurance, that if we discontinue the trade it will not be carried on by others. I own it appears to me a little extraordinary that gentlemen should endeavour to draw a line of distinction between the duty of this House and its inclinations. Let me remind them of their own principles and their own practice. It is in the same tone that they talk of this distinction, and the impolicy of giving immediate freedom to the slaves in the West Indies. Why then let me tell them, that by continuing that slavery, they are continuing that which they know to be a great hardship upon the slaves there. But what would their answer be? They would say, "we

must suffer it to be continued; for by taking it suddenly away, we should create a greater evil than that which we proposed to remedy. That is the real state of the case, and a choice of evils is the point in issue.—The right hon. gentleman stated roundly that this House, by continuing this trade for any length of time, would be guilty of a flagrant breach of duty. Whether it be a flagrant breach of duty, or any breach of duty, I will take leave to say is the whole question, and that is to be decided by a comparison of evils. The question then will be, whether, by abolishing the trade now, we are likely to create a greater evil than that which we would willingly remove? I say our interest is not any consideration at all with us except in a comparative sense; and that includes not only the safety of the whole of our islands, but also the happiness of the very people who now endure the hardships of slavery in the West Indies. I say, then, that if you take that course which, upon a view of all these points, appears to you to be the best, there can be no line of difference drawn between your duty and your inclination, because in that case you will have entirely performed your duty. I shall, therefore, do now what I did on a former occasion, because no good reason has, in my opinion, been given for my doing otherwise—leave this to the care and diligence of the legislature of the colonies. Gentlemen may ask, why do you not fix the period beyond which you will not allow this traffic to continue? I may be told that I am acting inconsistently with my former principles, because I agreed to the last address, considering it as a notice to the planters to diminish the importation of negroes; that they have had full notice, and if they have not acted upon it, the fault is entirely their own. To which I answer, if you consider the immediate abolition of the trade as a punishment upon those who are interested in its continuance, your reasoning is correct; but if you regard the abolition as a measure, not of punishment upon a few individuals, but for general policy, your reasoning is inconclusive; and in that view of the subject, there is the same reason for continuing your notice as there was for giving it; for if the trade be now in the same state as it was then, the reasons which made you then forbear from immediate abolition, should induce you to forbear now. Those who wish most eagerly

for the abolition may have very good wishes, but I do not know that their wishes will have the effect which they expect. If the planters go on in a system of ameliorating the condition of the negroes, that will of itself have a good effect, however discontented the advocates for the abolition of the Slave-trade may be. Upon the whole, in considering this as I ought to consider every question, I ask myself "how am I to do the greatest practical good?" And in that view, I own I am inclined to trust for a while to the colonial assemblies by way of experiment. Had I no hopes of considerable public advantage by doing so, I own I should not be inclined to follow either the proposition which is now before us, or that which is recommended in its stead; but I should follow the ideas of a man now no more; a man who left no part of the interests of mankind unexamined, who brought with him more wisdom in discussing every subject he attempted to investigate than any man I ever knew, I need not hardly say I mean the late Mr. Burke. His idea was to take much of the power of legislation upon this subject out of the hands of the colonies, and to make many regulations within ourselves relative to our traffic on the coast of Africa; by which he wished to ameliorate the condition of the negro, and cause the Slave-trade to die a natural death. I may be asked, "why do you not move something to that effect?" My answer is, I do not see the probability of producing that desirable effect, or else I would with pleasure move it. I say also, that in point of fact, from whatever cause, you have not succeeded in your endeavours to abolish the trade; that your notice to the planters has hitherto been insufficient, and that there has been no good reason assigned to-night why that notice should not be farther continued, and therefore I shall vote against the present motion. If I could with a wish abolish the Slave-trade, desirable as that may be, still I should, in the present state of the colonies, fear the effect of it. Great apprehensions are entertained that great evils might follow, and it is from that fear that my difficulty arises. Something has been said to-night tending to show that much of the opposition to this motion proceeds from a general hatred to all innovation, arising from an abhorrence which so many of us feel towards French principles; that indeed from that abhorrence proceeds a

disposition to oppose every thing that tends to favour the freedom of mankind. So far is that idea from actuating me upon this occasion, that my hatred of French principles and French freedom would rather increase my hatred of the slavery of the negroes; for certainly no two things in human life can bear a greater resemblance than the slavery of negroes and French freedom; and therefore it is not on account of any general principles I entertain against innovation or against reform, that I oppose this motion.—This is the view I have of the question. I was anxious to state my sentiments upon it, the more particularly as an attempt was made to distinguish between our duty and our inclination. My duty leads me to what I am now doing. I am considering how I can best secure the happiness of millions; and I believe I am pursuing the best mode for that purpose, by trusting this subject, for a while at least, to the care of the colonial assemblies.

Mr. *Barham* said, that it seemed to be the chief object of several speeches delivered that night, to persuade the House, that all those who, professing to condemn the trade, should nevertheless vote against the present motion, were, in fact, secret friends of the trade, and deserved only the reproach of hypocrisy in addition to the other reproaches usually heaped upon them. It was possible, however, that a man might approve of the end, and yet consider the means as highly unsuitable to attain it. For his part, he would not be deterred by such insinuations, either from giving the vote he thought it his duty to give, or from expressing the sentiments he felt. What would govern his vote on this occasion, as it always had done, was an earnest desire that the trade should cease.—With regard to the motion, he had always maintained the impracticability of effecting the abolition in this way, and was convinced that the attempt would only tend to perpetuate the trade in a shape still more adverse to the interests of humanity than it was at present. It had been sincerely asked, about what time the trade might be brought to a conclusion, if those means were adopted which he and others had recommended; and one gentleman had been represented as wishing it to last 240 years. The answer he should make to this question would be, "let it cease as soon as possible." For the purpose of cultivating new lands, he wished it not to continue a moment; and

he was glad to hear it proposed to make compensation, to the owners of these lands, because he thought it would facilitate the adoption of many desirable regulations in the islands. For his own part, though he pretended not to make so great a sacrifice as his hon. friend, he was as desirous to renounce whatever share of such compensation might be due to him; but he had no authority to relinquish the right of others, which, in many cases, might be their all, and for which, if taken away for a public purpose, the public would undoubtedly give a full indemnification. One advantage of the plan, which was by some persons derided as nugatory, over that which they pursued themselves, was pretty evident—it would operate, at least, immediately. Instead of giving an annual spur to the trade, as the hon. gentleman's motions did, the trade would be immediately checked and confined. While various restrictions were adopted here to narrow the supply, every regulation might be introduced in the colonies to lessen the demand. By such measures alone could the abolition ever be effected.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Canning - - -	}	83
		Mr. Hobhouse - - -		
NOES	{	Sir William Young -	}	87
		Mr. Sewell - - - -		

So it passed in the negative.

Debate in the Commons on the Newspapers Regulation Bill.] April 4. The Attorney General rose to move for leave to bring in a Bill for regulating Newspapers. He recited the difficulty there was in obtaining a verdict against the proprietor, the printer, or the publisher of a newspaper, on account of the want of evidence of the purchase of a paper at the office belonging to any of these persons; as also of the difficulty that sometimes occurred in purchasing a paper; and commented upon the doubtful propriety of considering the bond which was given at the Stamp office, for the payment of the duty on advertisements, as evidence in all cases against the proprietor, either in a civil action or criminal prosecution; and stated, that a case had lately been laid before him, in which it appeared that a gentleman, who had given his bond for a certain newspaper, had, for upwards of a year and a half, ceased to be a pro-

prietor of that paper. He would state to the House the circumstance which had first determined him to bring forward the present measure. Gentlemen would remember that some months ago there appeared, in a London newspaper, the Courier, an account of the French prisoners at Liverpool, having been treated in a manner, which, if true, reflected the highest disgrace on the English character; but which, if false, the publisher of it, knowing it to be so, deserved the severest punishment. There were impediments against his prosecuting this paper, from which he hoped the legislature would relieve him. When he first saw the account just alluded to, he thought he had sufficient evidence, and accordingly filed his information. About the fate of the prosecution he was not very anxious; but he found that he was prosecuting a man, who, though not a non-entity, was not to be found any where. This was the printer; and as to the proprietor, the gentleman whose name had been entered as such and given bond at the stamp office, had ceased to be the proprietor more than a year ago. Him he had it in his power to prosecute criminally, but he would not do so. He maintained, that although this bond was, or might be evidence against this gentleman, upon an action for the stamp duties, yet it would be too hard to give it in evidence in any other action or criminal prosecution, because he could not, in any fair sense of the thing, be called the proprietor, since he did not receive any of the profits of the publication, and had a year and a half ago sold his share in it. Besides endeavouring to ascertain who were the true proprietors, it was necessary to prevent the revenue from being defrauded. He held in his hand a parcel of papers which had been found in a neutral vessel going to France, and the whole of which were unstamped. They contained in them information, which, if any man had written and sent in another form to the enemy, he would have committed the highest crime a man could be guilty of; and in that point of view he must consider the fraud upon the revenue as of little consequence. But as to those unstamped papers, he could easily find out the printer of them; but he must then fail in the prosecution, because he could not legally prove their having been published at the office of the printers. The Stamp office, anxious to secure the duties arising from papers, had lately pro-

hibited the printing of any paper without a stamp; and one newspaper very properly stated the circular letter from the Stamp office in terms of approbation of the measure. To his great surprise, however, the very paper which spoke of the measure in that way, and which he held in his hand, was without a stamp. The great blessing so peculiar to the English constitution, of allowing men to publish their sentiments without restraint, ought never to be taken away, except in circumstances of great necessity and danger. He did not mean to infringe upon those at present. His proposition was only this, that he was not to be told by men who derived large profits from newspapers, he was not to know whom to prosecute, and that they were not to stand in any situation of responsibility. His intention therefore was, that it should be the duty of the commissioners of the Stamp office, to see that no stamps should be delivered out to any persons, except to the proprietors, printers, or publishers of papers, whose names should be all known: that these were to make an affidavit of their being so; and were to be answerable in the same manner as those who had hitherto given their bond for the payment of the duties. To show the necessity of preventing papers from going to France, he would state what an ingenious way people had of conveying intelligence to that country. In one of these papers found on board a neutral vessel, was a letter, purporting to be an advice to the lords of the Admiralty, which mentioned the intended sailing of the outward-bound West India fleet, and that it was to be convoyed only by two frigates. The writer of this letter at the same time pretended to be very anxious about the safety of the fleet. Another article in one of these papers, stated, that as the people of England were about to be raised in a mass, the French would not be such fools as to invade this country, but that they would go to Ireland. To prevent such intelligence as this from being given to our enemies, it was necessary to stop the exportation of papers to France altogether. There was another species of publication, of which an infinite number were circulated, the authors, of which were not known, but they were certainly conducted by very able men. On the subject of religion these writings were most horrid and blasphemous; and as to politics and government, their tendency was highly criminal.

He should see how responsibility was to attach upon the printers of these books; but as they were not immediately connected with his present object, he would postpone the consideration of them to a further time. The object of his present motion was, to make the justice of the country effectual in public prosecutions; and he should feel the most lasting satisfaction if he should find that it would accomplish the object he had long wished for, namely to enable men of rank and consequence in the country to bring those persons to justice, who falsely represented their public conduct, as proceeding from improper motives. And here he must observe, that he would make no distinction between those papers which took different sides of the question, for, and against, his majesty's ministers. He then concluded, by moving, "That leave be given to bring in a bill for preventing the mischiefs arising from the printing and publishing Newspapers, and papers of a like nature, by persons not known, and for regulating the printing and publication of such papers in other respects."

Mr. *Sheridan* said, it would be with the utmost reluctance that he gave his consent to any measure by which the liberty of the press would be affected. He could discover in the present proposition not merely the beginning of a system to restrain the liberty of the press. It was said that newspapers were sometimes printed on unstamped paper; he wished to know whether "The Anti-Jacobin," a paper which some gentlemen on the other side might know, was to be included in the regulation, and whether this collection of wit and pleasantry was to be printed on stamped paper. The learned gentleman said, that papers of every party were to be comprehended in the measure he proposed. If the learned gentleman did not know that the papers which were in the interest of ministers indulged in that species of slander and abuse which he reprobated, his reading must be confined to opposition papers. He never had heard, however, that the calumnies from that quarter had called forth the exertion of the learned gentleman. With regard to the regulation, that all the proprietors should be obliged to give bond to be responsible, it was one to which he could not agree. Unless a number of persons were to join in the establishment of a paper, it would often be impossible, from the capital required, to establish one at

all; and such a regulation would certainly discourage people from having any share in a newspaper. He should be glad to know, whether by this it was meant that if government paid a paper for abusing the opposition, the Treasury, by so assisting to keep up the paper, was to be considered as a proprietor, and to be responsible for the consequences? If so, it would tend to reconcile him to the measure now proposed.

Mr. *Tierney* said, that the learned gentleman had insinuated, that the editor of the paper he had spoken so much about, inserted the letter from Liverpool respecting the French prisoners, knowing it to be false. This he would positively contradict, and could assure the House, on the authority of the editor himself, that he had not the smallest reason to believe that the contents of the letter were false; and he had merely inserted it with the view of affording an opportunity of contradicting it, if its statements should turn out to be erroneous. He was certain that gentleman had not the slightest suspicion that he was inserting any thing calculated to occasion mischief. He stated this fact to set the honourable and learned gentleman right, and, to rescue an innocent man from the consequences of a prosecution. As to the proposed bill, he foresaw what would be its consequences to the liberty of the press; the clog it would create to talent and to literature; the restraint it would be on political freedom. Prosecutions upon prosecutions would be pursued, till every spark of public spirit would be lost. This was already sufficiently manifest in the prosecution of the printer who published the pamphlet written in answer to the bishop of Landaff; one of the counts in the bill of indictment stated, "that, among other charges, he, the said Johnson, with an intent to vilify the right hon. William Pitt, did charge him the said William Pitt, with being insincere in his endeavours to make peace," &c. The design of this bill was, to fetter political discussion, and keep the people in the dark; for, after it had passed into a law, such a pamphlet would not again be published. No one would venture to publish high treason against the majesty of William Pitt.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, that the bill went to an exclusion of public discussion, and so far operated as a previous restriction.

Mr. *Pitt* insisted that the bill did not

contain the least alteration of the existing laws. Its prime object was, the prevention and punishment of treasonable slanders and seditious abuse. Let any man look at the newspapers of the present day, and he would find how necessary it was to check the evil here complained of. As to the paper mentioned by his learned friend, what was its actual purport? Was it giving articles of information to Englishmen? No; it was giving information and advice to the Directory of France: it was the instrument and engine of treason and rebellion. As to the prosecution established against the printer mentioned, for the libel against himself, he could only say, that it was not the personality, but because it implicated the welfare of the state and the character of parliament with him, in one direct charge of insincerity, that it was commenced. But the charge of insincerity did not originate there: it proceeded from that club whence were disseminated opinions not less schismatic and erroneous, and from whose principles proceeded that pamphlet of a learned gentleman (Mr. *Erskine*), not then in his place, who, not content with patronising and protecting every species of libel that political slander and malignity could invent, at last introduced one more libellous in its nature than any he had ever defended; a pamphlet not more famous for its calumny than its malignity, and not more abounding with either than with unfounded declamation and inflammatory zeal. The bill went to prevent slander, both public and private, because it demanded adequate responsibility if a breach were committed in either.

Earl *Temple* insisted on the necessity of checking the growth of sedition and treason, which had lately made its appearance in the newspaper just mentioned. For this purpose he thought the hon. gentleman who had a personal knowledge of the editor, should forthwith give up his name, that such a scoundrel should be brought forth, and committed to merited punishment.

Mr. *Tierney* did not conceive that the noble lord, who had so proudly boasted of his stake in the country—a stake which it now appeared had been stolen out of the public hedge—had any right to put such a question. He did not stand in the light of a common informer. The person of whom he spoke was esteemed by his friends. He did not deserve the coarse appellation which had been used; nor

would the noble lord have ventured to use it to his face. He would advise the noble lord not to ask questions too flip-pantly, otherwise he might receive such an answer as he would not like.

Lord *W. Russell* said, that the bill was an insidious blow at the freedom of the press. It would be more decorous in the learned gentleman to notice the attacks which had been made on members of that House, charging them with holding a correspondence with France. Those libel-lers could not be unknown to the minis-ters, as the name of one of them* ap-peared in the pension list, which was that day laid on the table.

Sir *W. Pulteney* expressed his jealousy and alarm, lest the bill should prove de-trimental to the liberty of the press. The bill came in a very questionable shape, and ought to be watched with much cir-cumspection. The liberty of the press was of such a sacred nature, that we ought to suffer many inconveniences rather than check its influence in such a manner as to endanger our liberties; for he had no he-sitation in saying, that without the liberty of the press, the freedom of this country would be a mere shadow. He could not consent to render all proprietors of news-papers responsible for whatever appeared in the paper with which they happened to be commercially connected. It was ex-ceedingly unfair, to make a man respon-sible for the insertion of paragraphs which he had never seen, because he committed the care of the paper to a printer or editor always responsible for what appeared in his publication. Were such a law passed, there would be an end to the liberty of the press. As to the argument respecting the necessary check to private scandal and aspersions upon public characters, he thought them futile. He, for one, despised all newspaper calumnies, and could never reconcile it to his mind, that, in order to save him from public animadversion, there ought to be a check given to the liberty of the press.

Leave was given to bring in the bill.

King's Message respecting the Designs of the Enemy.] April 20. Mr. Secretary Dundas presented the following Message from his Majesty:

“GEORGE R.

His Majesty thinks it proper to acquaint the House of Commons, that, from vari-

ous advices received by his majesty, it ap-pears that the preparations for the embark-ation of troops and warlike stores, are now carried on with considerable and in-creasing activity in the ports of France, Flanders, and Holland, with the avowed design of attempting the invasion of his majesty's dominions; and that in this de-sign the enemy is encouraged by the cor-respondence and communication of trai-torous and disaffected persons and socie-ties of these kingdoms.

“His majesty places the firmest reli-ance, under the Divine Providence, on the bravery of his fleets and armies, and on the zeal, public spirit, and unshaken courage, of his faithful people, already manifested in the voluntary exertions of all ranks of his majesty's subjects, for the general defence, and more than ever ne-cessary, at a moment when they are called upon to contend for the preservation of all that is dear to them.

“His majesty, in pursuance of the act, passed in the last session of parliament, for raising a provisional force of cavalry, has thought it right to give directions that the said cavalry should be drawn out, and embodied; and it is also his majesty's in-tention to order the part, not yet embo-died, of the augmentation made to the militia, under the acts of the last session, to be forthwith drawn out and embodied, in pursuance of his majesty's communica-tion already made to the House of Com-mons on this subject.

“His majesty feels it incumbent on him, to make the fullest use of the exten-sive means already provided by the wis-dom of parliament for the national de-fence; but he feels it at the same time, under the circumstances which he has stated, indispensably necessary to recom-mend it to the House of Commons to con-sider, without delay, of such farther mea-sures as may enable his majesty to defeat the wicked machinations of disaffected persons within these realms, and to guard against the designs of the enemy either abroad or at home. G. R.”

A similar Message was also presented to the Lords by lord Grenville. The said Message having been read,

Lord Grenville said, that the message so fully explained the points to which the attention of their lordships was directed, and the conduct which they were called upon to adopt, in the circumstances to which he referred, was so obvious, that he could add nothing to it, and he should say but

* William Augustus Miles,

a very few words in support of the address which he should have the honour to propose. The firm determination which their lordships had expressed on former occasion, to stand or fall with the laws, the liberties, and independence of the country, left no room to doubt that they would cordially enter into every measure by which those great objects were to be secured. They were now called upon to give another pledge to the principles which they had professed. They were called upon to demonstrate, that their spirit and their energy rose with the danger to which they were exposed. In proportion as the preparations of the enemy to invade the country advanced, in proportion as their designs of insatiable ambition and rancorous hostility were matured, they would find, in the parliament and councils of this country, new vigour to resist their attempts, and increased vigilance to defeat their machinations. In guarding against the open hostility of an enemy abroad, their lordships would exert that vigour and that authority which belonged to them, to disappoint the expectations of assistance which they entertained from the co-operation of their hirelings in this country. The measure which he meant to propose after the address was disposed of, was one which their ancestors had often adopted in cases of far less urgency and danger than the present. He should therefore content himself with moving the address.

The Address, which was an echo of the Message, was agreed to *nem. dis.* Lord Grenville then presented the bill. He said it was precisely the same with those bills which the House had passed on former occasions, except that it contained a clause in favour of those individuals already in custody, as it provided that the trials of persons against whom bills of indictment were found, should not be postponed by its operation. The bill passed through its several stages without opposition, and was sent down to the Commons.

Debate in the Commons on the King's Message respecting the Designs of the Enemy.] The King's Message having been read,

Mr. Secretary Dundas moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, to return his Majesty the humble thanks of this House for his most gracious Message; and to assure his majesty that

this House will, without delay, proceed to the consideration of the interesting subjects, therein mentioned, with all the attention which their importance to the safety of these kingdoms require."

Mr. *Sheridan* said:—It is impossible for any man who views the present situation of the country, in the same light I do, to imagine that I rise to oppose the address now moved. When his majesty feels it necessary thus to arouse and exert the strength and resources of his kingdoms, whatever service we may afford on such an occasion, we only fulfil that duty which, by the oath of allegiance, we are bound to perform. But however penetrated the country may be with the sense of the danger that awaits us, however ardent the spirit that now begins to arise, yet I cannot but breathe a wish, that something were superadded by this House to kindle the zeal of the people; without which, I fear, neither can be warmed to that ardour to which they should be raised on so trying an occasion. I rejoice most sincerely, to see this spirit begin to arise; but that joy is damped by observing the prevalence of a certain degree of supineness, a certain tardiness and hesitation to act. That any such tardiness or hesitation should prevail, must be matter of no small surprise. Are we not all interested in the issue? Yet as far as I can observe, there are many who make this threatened invasion a mere topic of conversation, or idle discussion; they seem to treat it as a subject of amusement or curiosity, and appear eager for its arrival, as if they were to gaze on it as on some strange phenomenon, or as if they were to enjoy it as a mere show, not tremble at it as a real peril. Far, however, be it from me to suppose that this absence of manly alacrity proceeds from any such motive as disaffection, or from any ill-timed resentment which the people may feel against his majesty's ministers. That want of spirit and alacrity which I lament, is occasioned by a reluctance to believe the real danger of their situation. An evident proof of this supineness appears in the slow progress of the voluntary contributions. To this measure I have professed, and still profess myself a friend. When I hinted at the propriety of trying a voluntary contribution, it was not merely the money it might produce which I had in view; it was the disposition and sentiments that should prompt and promote it, to which I was anxious to attend.

For confident I am, that as soon as one drop of English blood shall be shed by a Frenchman on English ground, English valour will that moment rise to a pitch equal to what its warmest admirers can desire. But although this extreme danger may be distant and out of sight, we should not therefore be lulled into a fatal insensibility to all the dreadful calamities it will bring upon us. If the French are to attempt to invade us, they will, no doubt, come furnished with flaming manifestoes. The Directory may instruct their generals to make the fairest professions of how their army is to act; but of those professions not one can be believed. Some may deceive themselves by supposing that the victorious Buonaparté will not tarnish his laurels, or sully his glory by permitting his army to plunder our banks, to ruin our commerce, to enslave our people; but that he is to come like a minister of grace, with no other purpose than to give peace to the cottager, to restore citizens to their rights, to establish real freedom, and a liberal and humane government. This were noble; this were generous; this were God-like. But far other are the objects that whet the valour, and stimulate the prowess of modern republicans. It is not glory they seek for; they are already gorged with it: it is not territory they grasp at, they are already incumbered with the extent they have acquired. What, then, is their object? They come for what they really want: they come for ships, for commerce, for credit, and for capital. They come for the sinews, the bones, the marrow, the very heart's blood of Britain.—But let us now examine what we are to purchase at this price. It is natural for a merchant to look closely to the quality of the article which he is about to buy at a high rate. Liberty is now their staple commodity; but should we not inquire, whether what they offer us be of the same kind with what they keep for their home consumption? Were they to perform the fair promises they hold out to us, they would then establish more liberty here, than they themselves enjoy. Were they to leave us the trial by jury uninterrupted, would not this be rearing a constitution in this country which would form a glaring contrast to their own.—The next consideration is, how to insure a successful resistance to an enemy of this temper and disposition. I will not here require of government to lay aside their prejudices or animosities; neither

will I require of those who oppose them altogether to suspend theirs; but both must feel that this sacrifice is necessary, at least on one point, resistance to the enemy; and upon this subject at least, I must entreat them to accord; for here it is necessary they should both act with one heart, and one hand. If there be any who say, we will oppose the French when we have succeeded in removing the present ministers, to them I answer: let us defer that for a moment; let us now oppose the enemy, and avert the storm, otherwise we shall not long have even ministers to combat and remove. There are some gentlemen who seem determined to divide their enmity and opposition between the ministers and the French; but the inevitable consequence of this division must be the conquest of the country by the French. I rejoice to see the necessary spirit begin to rise throughout the country; and when we on this side of the House manifest this spirit, and forget all other motives to action, I trust the same sentiments will prevail on the other side. But here I must observe, that the defence of the country might be essentially contributed to, by two very different classes of men: the one composed of those sturdy hulking fellows, whom we daily see behind coaches, or following through the streets and squares, their masters and mistresses; to those I would entrust the defence of the capital, and would add to them the able-bodied men which the different offices, such, for example, as the fire-offices might easily produce. His majesty would be thus enabled to employ his more disciplined troops in distant or more necessary service. There is another class I would also beg leave to allude to; and those are the young gentlemen of high rank, who are daily mounted on horses of high blood.—But amidst all these warlike preparations, the idea of peace should not be forgotten; nor would I have that precious object remain unaccomplished merely for a difference about some trifling points. For my part, I feel a more eager desire for peace than ever; for I by no means distrust the intrepidity and courage of my country. But, however desirous I may be for peace, I warn the right hon. gentleman that he must not think of treating for peace if the French should land. That last of humiliations would indeed break the spirit of the country.—The want of confidence in public men has more enfeebled the nation than any other

cause; and this want of confidence has principally arisen from the secession of certain gentlemen who have deserted the whig party in order to creep into place, that they may the better serve the cause of religion, morality, &c. as they would have it believed, but whose real motive was their anxiety to participate of place and power. On them it is incumbent to repair the injury they have done to the public spirit, not only by co-operating in the general efforts for resistance, but in a more liberal sacrifice of the emoluments they enjoy. As to any more coalitions, I shall never think of them with patience: they have done more mischief than any party hostilities can produce. The country feels it, and justly abhors them. Indeed, it has been the misfortune of the country to have been led by parties, and to look to this or that man as a head and a guide. I do not deny the abilities of the right hon. gentleman, neither am I insensible of the manly soul and mighty mind of my right hon. friend (Mr. Fox). But in a country of more than eight millions of inhabitants, and those of ardent hearts and enlightened understandings, if I am told there can be found but two men who can save it, I have only to say, that such a country is not worth saving, and must be destroyed. But, thank heaven, there is no such dearth amongst us of wise and able men, of men willing and prepared to save the country, in a crisis like the present. Let Englishmen but rely upon themselves—their heart and spirit will then return, and arm but their hands, and you will see if the British nation will tamely submit to be husseled out of its independence. Were we all banished from the country, there would still remain a sufficient number of men to conduct its affairs, without expecting its salvation at the hands of the right hon. gentleman, or my right hon. friend.—I am ashamed to say any thing concerning myself. I think it right, however, to declare, that my political enmity (private I have none) is irreconcilable to his majesty's present ministers; and my attachment to my right hon. friend, and to his political principles, is unaltered and unalterable; that my desire to procure a reform in parliament, as well as a reform of a multiplicity of abuses; to procure, if possible, indemnity for the past and security against future abuses, is undiminished. These are points to which I have long since and often pledged myself.

These are pledges which I will never abandon.

Mr. Pitt said, he felt much satisfaction at the eloquent, dignified, and impressive speech which had fallen from the hon. gentleman—a speech which appeared to come from a heart animated with a true English spirit, and which he was sure would meet with approbation in every quarter of the kingdom. After such a speech, he could not bring himself to dwell long upon those parts of the hon. gentleman's speech in which he had the misfortune not to concur with him. But he only did so because he thought unanimity at such a moment as the present most beneficial to the country. Instead of selecting passages from the hon. gentleman's speech to which he could not give his assent, he wished rather to express his sincere satisfaction at the change which appeared to have taken place in the sentiments of that hon. gentleman, from whatever cause that change had arisen. Gratified as he was with the declaration which the House had just made, and willing as he was to receive with pleasure those warm effusions of British spirit by which he was actuated, still he must beg leave to retain those opinions which he had so often expressed, and to which the House had acceded. The conduct of France, and those circumstances which led the hon. gentleman at this crisis to offer his support to government, so far from being new, were nothing more than what must naturally have been expected from that system which the French had manifested from the very earliest periods of the revolution, and which then met with the approbation of that hon. gentleman. Their conduct, in every instance, had verified the predictions of the profoundest politicians, and had proved the wisdom of that system of resistance which, happily for this country, had been adopted in opposition to that hon. gentleman's advice. If that system had not been adopted at a period when the zeal and animation of the people, though great, were not so great as at present, the hon. gentleman would have been left without any means of exercising that zeal which he had now professed, and would no longer have had this House as a theatre in which to display his abilities. He hoped he should not be considered as depreciating the effect of that zeal which the hon. gentleman had manifested; but he begged

leave to say, that though by the accession of the hon. gentleman they might gain as much as could be gained by the talents of an individual, still, even such an accession could add but little to the spirit and unanimity which the nation had previously manifested. The nation, long before the hon. gentleman, had displayed the utmost unanimity. In maintaining this arduous conflict, ministers would certainly be happy in the assistance of the hon. gentleman; but they would have been fully able to maintain the contest, even if they had not had the benefit of such assistance. Let us, said Mr. Pitt, give the hon. gentleman our thanks for the support which he promises;—let us give him every degree of praise for the spirit which he has displayed; but let us not be guilty of that injustice to the rest of the nation, as to suppose that the country was not fully as secure before the hon. gentleman's declaration, as it is now.

The Address was agreed to *nem. con.*

Debate in the Commons on the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill.] The Lords having sent down a bill "to empower his majesty to secure and detain such persons as his majesty shall suspect are conspiring against his person and government;" on the motion that it be read a first time,

Mr. *Sheridan* said, he was so tenacious of the liberty of the subject, and so unwilling to assent to any infringement upon it, that he could not assent to this measure without much stronger proofs of its necessity than any which had yet been given. It might be said, that there were persons now under trial; and that, therefore, to produce specific evidence in support of the necessity of the bill, would be doing that which might operate to the prejudice of such accused persons. To this he would answer, that the very passing such a bill as this, was, in truth, creating the greatest alarm, and raising the highest prejudices. Indeed there was not before the House at present so plausible a ground for suspending the Habeas Corpus act, as there was when it was last suspended. Then a committee of each House sat for several days, examined into the subject, and declared their opinion to be, that there existed in this country a conspiracy against its constitution and government. The minister then brought forward, what he contended to be, full proof of the existence of such conspiracy. It was then doubted, whether in reality there was such

a conspiracy or not; such, however, was the evidence, and the legislature acted upon it. Here there was no evidence; on the contrary, the assurances of the chancellor of the exchequer tended to show, that there existed, at this moment in the country, a general spirit of loyalty, and attachment to the government. He should therefore have considered such a statement from the minister rather as evidence that such a measure as this was unnecessary than otherwise. When this measure was urged upon the ground, that there were a number of persons who corresponded with the French, and invited them hither, he could not assent to it, because there was no better proof of that than the minister's assertion, to which experience did not teach him to give implicit credit.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that with regard to the existence of a conspiracy, what he had said had been misrepresented by the hon. gentleman. It had been stated, as if he had conveyed an idea, that nothing was to be found in the country but loyalty and attachment to government. That loyalty; he was happy to think, was general; but so far was he from stating it to be unanimous, that on the contrary, he had stated expressly, that although a large portion were favourable to government, there were nevertheless a description of persons, too considerable both in number and activity, to be passed by unnoticed, whose conduct was of an opposite nature. Was it then to be contended, that because these circumstances were so plain as to call forth the zeal of almost every man in the country, except its enemies, that therefore we were to take no precautions for our own safety? The hon. gentleman said, there was a period when we ourselves did not think it necessary to take this precaution, without laying evidence before parliament. There was, indeed, a time when evil disposed persons were active, and when there were insurrections and difficulties to be overcome, and danger to be avoided. But would the hon. gentleman undertake to say, that the preparations made by the enemy for a descent upon this country, were at any other period during the war ever so ripe, so extensive, and so truly alarming as at present. France had, in the former part of the contest, been totally engaged in her continental wars! the powerful confederacy which had been formed against her, kept her troops in constant action, and employed every means and every resource

to which she could resort. We were well aware of the weakness of her means, with respect to the execution of any project of invasion against us, though we were at the same time fully satisfied of her destructive views, and her wishes to annihilate us as an independent nation. But involved as she then was, we had less to apprehend from any attempts which, in the heat of inordinate ambition, she might have been induced to make. But the case was now different. The French government, freed from the perplexities in which it had been involved by the military exertions of the continental powers, was at liberty to employ its troops directly against us, and centered all its hopes in attacking this nation, which had so gloriously opposed the torrent of general anarchy. If he wanted any other evidence to show the necessity of the interference of parliament, to invest the executive government with the power stated in the bill, he would make use of no other to recommend it, than the spontaneous offer which the hon. gentleman had made in the beginning of the debate, to join in the most effectual manner, in promoting the zealous and spirited unanimity of the whole body of the people, in their exertions to secure from the rapacity of an unprincipled invader, the possession of every object that was dear to them. But was there any thing that would more produce unanimity than the adoption of the present measure, which went to the disabling disaffected and dangerous men from destroying by open acts of violence and insidious arts, that unanimity on which the hon. gentleman had laid such stress? But it was urged, that notorious proofs ought to be furnished to induce the House to give their assent to the present measure. In answer to that, he would ask, what was the nature of the proofs which appeared? The House had been told, on the authority of the executive government, that a strong spirit of disaffection prevailed both in this country and in Ireland. Yet if that information was not deemed sufficiently satisfactory, he would maintain, what he was satisfied could not be denied, that the House and the public had been told so upon the testimony of the French themselves. Were gentlemen, then, to disbelieve all these authorities? Would the House act differently from the acknowledged practice of their ancestors, and not adopt salutary measures of defence and general preservation, unless the

peril was immediate and unavoidable? Such a conduct would not only be contrary to the wisest precedents, but would be directly the reverse of that which human reason dictated. Taking the question, therefore, in every possible point of view, he was sure that these grounds were sufficient to induce the House to agree to the bill.

Mr. *Nicholls* thought this was not a measure adopted from confidence, but from the apprehension of invasion; and feeling it to be so, he could not give a silent vote upon it.

The House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. J. C. Villiers -	}	183
		Mr. Steele - - -		
NOES	{	Mr. Hobhouse - -	}	5
		Mr. Greene - - -		

List of the Minority.

Bouverie, Ed.	Thompson, T.
Russel, lord J.	Tellers.
Russel, lord W.	Hobhouse, B.
Sheridan, R. B.	Green, J.

Mr. *Sheridan* argued against the duration of the bill, which, as it came from the lords, was until the first of February, 1799, a period, which he conceived, was much too long. He conceived also that there was no necessity for giving it that duration, because it was probable that the next session would commence much before that time.

The *Speaker* observed, that the question of the duration of the bill could only be discussed in the committee.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said, that no man would have been more forward than himself to join in the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act in case of absolute necessity; but as it was a very strong measure, very strong proof of its necessity ought to be adduced before it was adopted. He saw no such proof. He had heard much of the notoriety of a conspiracy existing against the government of this country; he knew of no such notoriety; and could not vote upon an assertion of such notoriety.

Mr. *Tierney* said, he should be extremely sorry it went out to the public, that he had assented to any measure which went to abridge the liberty of the subject, on the words of the minister. He did no such thing. He voted upon much better evidence. The distinction between this and the former suspension of the Habeas Corpus act was, that the preamble of the pre-

sent bill was founded upon the verdict of the grand jury. He hoped that the determination of that jury would be found erroneous; but it was impossible for him to pronounce it so until another jury had passed their verdict upon the question. He considered the finding of the bill as his justification for the vote he had given, and he thought that no man ought to be ashamed of giving a vote upon confidence in a verdict of a jury of his country.

Mr. *Jolliffe* lamented that the brilliant and persuasive eloquence, the liberal and generous conduct of Mr. *Sheridan* should be shaded with a sentiment of resistance to the general principle of this measure, when he gave the executive government credit for their exertions against the common enemy, it was hard he would deny them support against their domestic enemies, the enemies of the constitution. Unanimity was now demanded; and whatever censure might hitherto devolve on ministers, it was now one common cause with them and the people, and ought to be supported.

The bill was read a second time, and committed; when it was proposed to fill up the blank as before stated, Mr. *Pitt* contending in favour of the 1st of February 1799, and the gentlemen on the opposite side of the House insisting upon the 1st of November next, or till ten days after the commencement of the next session of parliament.

Mr. *Tierney* thought that the period of the recess was quite long enough for the suspension to continue. If an invading enemy should land, and the members be scattered in different districts, or violent convulsions or treasons existed in London and the parliament should necessarily be held elsewhere, still there was no reason for continuing the suspension longer than till parliament should meet, let that meeting take place whenever it might.

Mr. *Pitt* could foresee no exigency of affairs that could carry away the parliament from the capital, if members were scattered over the country, they could as easily meet there as elsewhere; and if an enemy were to land and even convulsions prevailed in the capital, still there was no reason for removing the parliament from it.

The committee divided: For the 1st of November, 14; For the 1st of February 1799, 113. The bill then went through the rest of its stages, and was passed.

Debate in the Commons on the Land Tax Redemption Bill.] April 23. Mr. *Pitt* having moved, that the bill be now read a second time,

Mr. *Jolliffe* implored delay, as he wished to give the country an opportunity of understanding the bill, for there was not a man in that House, nor any body of condition out of it, whom this measure did not affect. For these reasons, he should move to leave out the word "now," and to add the words "upon this day fortnight."

Mr. *Pierrepoint* was far from being satisfied that the measure would be of advantage to the country. He was told that it was merely a financial regulation, which would not do any harm, and was likely to do much good. For his part, he considered it to have no other purpose than to remove the objections that lay in the way of a new imposition. If the present land tax were permitted to be sold, the new land tax might also be so disposed of, and thus successive burthens might be laid on, until land would be at length hardly worth taking. He hoped gentlemen would be careful how they hastily adopted a measure which might ultimately annihilate a class of men who had been so distinguished for their loyalty and public zeal.

Mr. *Pitt* said, he was so desirous that every public accommodation might be given to those who had not yet come to a decision in their own minds on the expediency of the measure, that he would not object to a reasonable delay between the second reading and the commitment; but he could not accede to a delay of the second reading as it would go to controvert the principle of the bill.

Lord *Sheffield* said, that the measure was so unjust, so partial, and in every respect so bad, that no mode of carrying it into execution, or even any advantage that possibly might be obtained, could reconcile him to it; but on full examination, he was convinced that the mode proposed could not attain the object, which he understood was to raise the value of certain funds, or, in other words, to ease that property which was not taxed at all, at the expense of another kind of property, viz, land and houses, which was at present overwhelmed with taxes. He should never cease to remonstrate against such conduct towards the landed interest. We should recollect that it was to them we should look for the support of the constitution, rather than to the mo-

nied interest, and those living in towns, who could change and remove their property, and improve it in times of confusion. The attachment men have to the landed possessions of their ancestors, to houses and to lands beautified and improved by themselves, was very great; and, perhaps, a large share of what was denominated love of country, was derived from our prejudices or attachment to our lands and places. But however it arose, he wished to maintain it, and that neither necessity nor disgust should put an end to it. He should think a too frequent transfer of land, or that it should be considered as a mere equivalent for money, or an object for traffic, no small evil. It would be the greatest misfortune, if landed men were forced to quit the country for a life of more limited expense in towns. The landed interest were making the greatest exertions in every way possible. Surely, then, it would be highly impolitic at this moment to subject them to the most galling and partial imposition that was ever devised, and to put this heretofore annual tax on a worse footing than any other; for all the funds being redeemable, they possibly might be paid off, and the taxes reserved for them might cease; but the land tax, when voted perpetual, and sold, would for ever be a tax. They would not be human creatures, if it did not disgust and irritate them; and heavy would be the charge against a minister who should take advantage of the public apprehension to carry a measure so contrary to every principle of equity. There was nothing to be dreaded more than a kind of cant we sometimes heard on such occasions, "that the measure is very bad; but I do not like to object to money measures. Government must have money." They must and will have money; but there are modes of getting it more constitutional and better than that proposed. It was remarkable, at a time of so much distress, that instead of a measure so extraordinary and so uncertain in its effect, we did not rather consider the propriety of collecting this tax as the law directs, which says, that it should be laid not only upon the land, but on personal property, wares, merchandize, ready money, and even book debts. He did not know that it could be carried quite so far; but it was well worth the attention of parliament to make the tax less partial and more productive.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* was surprised

that gentlemen should be calling for the delay of a bill, the essence of which was printed, and in their hands above a fortnight ago. He could see no possible objection to the measure. The landholder was under no obligation to redeem his land tax, and had therefore no ground for complaint. The measure had a tendency to raise the funds, and, if it had that effect, the landed gentlemen would receive their share of the benefit.

Mr. *T. W. Coke* said, that this calamitous war had very much diminished the value of land; and this measure would diminish it still more. In Norfolk, land that, before the war, sold at thirty, now would not produce twenty-five years purchase; and as to the city of Norwich, real estates there could hardly be sold at all, for nobody was inclined to buy. It was not difficult to see that another land tax would follow this; and by-and-by land would not be worth holding.

Mr. *Buxton* differed from the hon. gentleman, as to the value of land in Norfolk. He admitted that it had depreciated in value since the war; but he himself had within a month sold a little bit of land at 29 years purchase. He knew not whether any other tax was to be imposed upon land; but if there should, he hoped it would be accompanied with a proportionate impost on other property.

Mr. *Hobhouse* said:—The fact mentioned by the hon. gentleman is of great consequence. You perceive, Sir, that even the agitation of this subject occasions a decrease in the value of land to the amount of five years purchase. Does not this strongly exemplify what may be expected after the passing of this bill? The right hon. secretary contends, that this business ought not to be postponed, because sufficient time has been given for gentlemen to make themselves masters of the plan. True it is, that we have been almost three weeks in possession of the printed resolutions, but the bill was only delivered within these few hours. The object of the motion is, to give time for the consideration of the new clauses; and what can be more reasonable? But the right hon. secretary denies that the country gentlemen have any cause for discontent, because an option is given to them, whether they will redeem their land tax or not. But is it no injury to them to have their land tax, which before was annually granted, and might have been lessened, rendered perpetual, and if they

cannot redeem it themselves, offered for sale to a third person?

The question being put, That the word "now" stand part of the question, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Lord Hawkesbury - - }	153
	{ Mr. Simeon - - - }	
NOES	{ Mr. Jolliffe - - - }	38
	{ Mr. Pierrepont - - - }	

The bill was then read a second time.

May 9. On the order of the day for recommitting the bill,

Lord *Sheffield* said, he was by no means reconciled to the measure. It was unjust and oppressive; and if it had any beneficial tendency, it was at the expense of the landholder. It went to reduce the price of land, and the landed gentleman was made a sacrifice. If the measure was to have any effect, where was the landed gentleman to get the money to buy his land tax? If he procured the money, it must be drawn from sources where it was at present much more usefully employed. It would be impossible to borrow the money; for what monied man would lend his money at legal interest, when he could make 6 per cent in the public funds, with the prospect of increasing his capital 50 per cent on the return of peace?

Mr. *Peel* said, that the measure seemed to him of such a nature, that no one could object to it. He saw no attack upon the landed interest; it only gave them power to redeem themselves from a burthen which was now imposed upon them, and how could it affect the trade of the country? If persons were making 8 or 9 per cent of their money in trade, they would not of course draw it out; or if they did, it was at their own choice. In short, as a measure calculated to support the credit and best interests of the country, he conceived it entitled to the warmest support.

Mr. *Dennison* said, that the bill was so pernicious in its principle, and so vexatious in its operation, that he must oppose it. This was the worst period that could possibly be chosen to call upon the landed gentlemen to redeem or purchase their land tax. It was extremely unjust to put more than their share of burthen upon the landed interest. We were all engaged in a common cause, and for the support of that cause we ought all to contribute equally.

Sir *John Sinclair* considered this as an exceptionable measure, and therefore he should oppose it. But before he went to the measure itself, he would state an objection to the legality of their proceedings. The House had already voted a land tax for the year 1798, at the sum of 4s. in the pound, and, consistent with their own orders and rules, that bill could not be repealed, altered, or amended, in the same session, unless the House had reserved to themselves a special power for that purpose, by a clause in the bill.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the hon. baronet would certainly do right to settle the point of legality, as he termed it, before he entered into the principles of the measure.

Sir *John Sinclair* then, moved the reading of a clause in the act of 7 Geo. 3rd, c. 4, and the clause in the land tax of the present year, giving a power to alter and vary it in the same session of parliament. He had moved that these clauses should be read, in order to establish that distinction, that there were two distinct modes of reservation, the one of which went to the total of a bill, and the other only to alter and vary parts of it. And, indeed, so much was this distinction impressed upon the minds of the House, that in the bill of this session which was to regulate the qualifications of commissioners of the land tax, the bill had for its preamble, "An act to vary and alter so much of the land tax as relates to the qualifications of commissioners." So the bill before the House ought to be intituled, "A bill for altering and varying the former bill, so far as relates to the particular objects in view." This he conceived to be an objection fatal to the measure, and that the House, consistently with its own rules and orders, could not proceed farther in it.

Mr. *Pitt* said, that the hon. baronet had stated, that there was a power to vary, alter, and repeal any part of the act, and consequently to alter, vary, and repeal every part of the act alluded to in succession. The House would determine whether this could be any thing short of a complete power to repeal the whole, if necessary. This was a question which he submitted to the House and the chair. The bill did not propose to alter, vary, or repeal the land tax bill for the present year in any one clause whatever. The House had voted a land tax for the year 1798, and this bill left the provisions for

the year 1798 exactly as it found them. the only difference was this, that whereas by the annual bill, the duty would cease at the expiration of that act, by the operation of the present bill the duties were continued.

The *Speaker* said, this was a question upon which it was impossible for him to give any opinion. The House had heard both the clauses read, and they would determine upon them. At the same time, if they required his opinion, he would give it. It was his duty to bring to their recollection their rules and orders, and when he had done so, it was for themselves to determine. He had no hesitation in saying, that he thought the present measure did not in the least touch upon the land tax act for the year, and that without the reservation in the act, this bill did not infringe upon the rule which prohibits the same measure to be twice agitated in the same session; but that if it did in effect, the reservation contained in the former bill was fully sufficient to justify the measure. The Land-tax act imposed a duty of 4s. in the pound for the year 1798, and this bill perpetuated that duty; so that this bill commenced its operation when the other ceased to act.

Sir *John Sinclair* said:—Mr. Speaker, I delayed troubling the House with any observations which may have occurred to me, on the plan to which our attention is once more directed, until this stage of our proceedings, because my objections lay, not to any particular branch of the resolutions which were originally proposed by the right hon. gentleman, but to the general scope and principle of the system; and I now arise to state those observations to the House, in the full conviction, that they will not only sufficiently justify the vote which I shall give this night, but also that they may contribute to awaken the attention of this House and of the public to the danger of such a bill passing into a law, which, after all the consideration I have been able to bestow upon it, even in its present state of maturity, as ripened in the bill now before us, and brought to all the perfection of which it is probably capable, seems to be at least as exceptionable as any measure that, to the best of my recollection, was ever suggested, either by the present, or by any former minister of this country. Before I proceed, however, to state the reasons which have induced me to oppose this bill, I think that it may not be improper to submit to

your consideration, and that of the House in general, an objection of a preliminary nature, namely, to the legality of our proceedings. It is well known that we have already voted a land tax of 4s. in the pound, "and no more," for the service of the year 1798, and that an act has passed for carrying that measure into effect. We have therefore precluded ourselves, by the indisputable law of parliament regarding the form of our proceedings, from again discussing the subject of a land tax during the present session, unless we have reserved power for that purpose. The House has been accustomed to reserve such a power in two ways, namely, first, a power to repeal the whole; or, secondly, any part of an act. Of the first we have an example in the 37th Geo. 3rd, c. 4, § 60, the words of which are as follow: "Provided always, and be it enacted, that this act may be altered, varied, or repealed, by any act or acts to be made in this present session of parliament." The clause in the land tax bill of this year is, however, of a very different nature, and is conceived in the following terms: "Provided always, and be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that any part of this act may be altered, varied, or repealed, by any act or acts to be made in this present session of parliament." Such a clause, I understand, was introduced into the annual land tax bill some years ago, with a view of enabling parliament to alter, to vary, or to repeal, any of those local regulations with which the act abounds that might be found oppressive, but it never could be intended to sanction a plan like the present; the object of which is, to overturn, not any particular part, but the whole tenor and principle of the act, and, indeed, by making the present land tax perpetual, to render any future act, on the same basis, perfectly unnecessary. It was in consequence of this clause alone, that we were justified in permitting a bill to be introduced by an hon. gentleman, (Mr. W. Bird) regarding the land tax commissioners. The object of that act is very properly declared in the title of the bill to be, "to alter and amend so much of an act passed in the present session of parliament (namely, the land tax act), as relates to the qualification of the commissioners." Whereas this is a bill, not for altering any part of the land tax act, which is all we are justified in doing, but for making perpetual a tax which, by an act passed this very session, is only granted

for one year, and no more. It overturns at the same time a system that has been uniformly acted upon for above a century, and in which the existence and authority of this House were supposed to have been deeply implicated.

I thought it necessary to call your attention to this preliminary objection, from the full conviction, that if we once suffer the forms of the House to be violated, we are not likely long to enjoy the essence and substantial benefits of this constitution. My objections, however, go, not only to the form of our proceedings, but to the principle of the bill itself. In regard to the first point, namely, the forms of the House, if we wish to preserve the appearance of any respect for them, we must necessarily defer the farther consideration of this bill until another session of parliament: but if we have any regard for the real interests of this country, I hope to make it appear, in the course of what I am now about to observe, that we ought never to suffer such a bill as this to be again discussed within these walls. The first objection that must strike at once every individual, is the one founded on that important principle of this constitution, and which has long been considered as essential to the existence and authority of this House, namely, that the taxes on land and malt, which are the surest and most productive branches of the revenue, instead of being permanently granted to the crown, "for supporting," in the words of the act, "his majesty's government" shall be annually voted. But we are told, that though it is proposed to make the land tax perpetual, yet that other taxes, even to a larger amount, (though that, by-the-by, has not been proved), which are now perpetual, are to have their nature altered, and are to be subjected to the annual vote of parliament; and certain duties on malt, sugar, tobacco, and snuff, are appropriated, by this bill, for that purpose. There is certainly some plausibility in the idea. At the same time the House will advert to this, that the produce of all taxes on consumption must be fluctuating, and must ever depend on a variety of circumstances which it is not in the power of parliament to control: for instance, prejudice, caprice, or passion, might, in the space of a few weeks, annihilate the revenue arising from tobacco and snuff; whereas the land tax must be paid, as long as the territory of the country remains productive. It is impossible, therefore, to listen to this

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sophistical answer to a plain, and indeed, unanswerable objection. The right hon. gentleman proposes, that the pillars of this constitution, and the existence and authority of this House, shall rest upon such frail foundations as the contents of a snuff-box, or of a pipe of tobacco. I wish, on the other hand, to see them remain on their old territorial basis, and that the value of a certain portion of the produce of the country shall be annually voted by the representatives of the people for the maintenance of our fleets and armies, and the other expenses of the Crown, and that, unless such a grant is made, that the whole frame and fabric of our government shall be unhinged. The first is a measure that may suit the narrow mind of a mere financier, who can think of nothing but taxation. The second, which has been sanctioned with the approbation of the greatest statesman that ever sat within these walls, forms a check, which I hope this House will not rashly hazard or abandon.

My next objection is of a legal nature, namely, on the effect that such an act must have upon the landed property of the country, and the endless confusion and litigation it must occasion, both in parishes regarding apportioning the land tax, and among individuals. On the first point, there can be no doubt. With respect to the second, nothing can be more desirable for a landed proprietor than to avoid law suits, and to have every thing connected with the title deeds of his estate as clear and distinct as possible. But how is that to be the case, if these resolutions should pass into a law. The land tax, when purchased or redeemed, is sometimes to be a real estate, sometimes a personal estate, and sometimes to be converted from a personal to a real estate. Is it possible for this House to countenance such confusion; and before we suffer such a bill to proceed one step farther, ought we not to hear what the attorney general for England, the lord advocate for Scotland, and other great luminaries of the law, consider may be the effect of such a system on the landed property of the two kingdoms? The gentlemen of the long robe, though extremely numerous in the House, (for this is far from being a *parliamentum indoctum*), have in general preserved a cautious silence upon this subject, which was matter of astonishment to me till I began to consider how much such a bill must benefit the profession,

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as we may trace in it the foundation of at least ten thousand law suits, one in each parish being a very moderate calculation; and thus no inconsiderable share of the remnant of free property, which the landed interest will be suffered to retain in their possession, will be absorbed. Let us take, for instance, the clause for selling a part of an estate for the purpose of redeeming the land tax. 1. Any part of the manor is to be sold, with the exception of the mansion-house. If not sold by public auction, how is it to be ascertained whether the price was a fair one? Here is an abundant source of litigation, more especially as there is no regulation as to the expenses attending the sales, nor the purchasing of the 3 per cent stock. 2. The surplus money is to be placed in the Bank of England, in government or other public securities, and then to be re-invested in land for the like uses, trusts, intents, and purposes, as the estate originally sold.—In the course of such transactions, who does not see a plentiful source of litigation, infinite trouble, and endless expense? The right hon. gentleman who brought in this bill was bred to the bar, and having some compassion for his old associates, whose professional profits have been so much impaired by the present unfortunate war, it is natural for him to embrace this opportunity of throwing some crumbs from his plentiful table, and of bestowing a million on Westminster-hall, which is the smallest sum that will accrue to it if such a bill passes into a law; but those who have any regard for the landed interest will advise them to remain as they are. At present they have nothing to do but to pay their annual land tax to the collector; but if they involve themselves in all the legal labyrinths of redemption, it is impossible to say when they will get out of them; they may be assured not without surrendering a considerable part of their property, to those professional friends who will undertake to extricate them.

The next objection that occurs to me is of a financial nature. We all know that the land tax, as it is now imposed, is extremely unequal: it is the object, however, of the present bill to perpetuate that inequality. Indeed the land tax is not only unequal, but has ever been considered as a very exceptionable impost, and one that ought only to be had recourse to in the most pressing and urgent necessity. In a famous debate, anno 1732, on the subject of reducing it to one shilling in

the pound, we are told, that a former chancellor of the exchequer (sir Robert Walpole), whose language was then received with repeated hearers and tumults of applause, thus expressed himself: "As to the manner of raising taxes upon the people, it is a certain maxim that that tax, which is the most equal and the most general, is the most just and the least burthensome. When every man contributes a small share, a great sum may be raised for the public service, without any man being sensible what he pays; whereas a small sum, raised upon a few, lies heavy upon each particular man, and is the more grievous in that it is unjust. The landholders bear but a small proportion to the people of this, or of any other nation, yet no man contributes any the least share to this tax but he that is possessed of a land estate; and yet this tax has been continued without intermission for above these forty years—it has continued so long and lain so heavy, that I may venture to say, many a landed gentleman in this kingdom has thereby been utterly ruined and undone:" and at the conclusion of the debate, he added, "the land tax is the most unequal, the most grievous, and the most oppressive tax, that ever was raised in this country. It is a tax which never ought to be raised but in times of the most extreme necessity. The best judges, the truest patriots in all countries, have been of opinion, that of all taxes, that upon immoveable goods, that upon lands and houses, ought to be the last resource."*

Such were the sentiments of a former chancellor of the exchequer, in consequence of which he proposed reducing the land tax to one shilling in the pound. His successor who now holds that office, follows a very different system, and endeavours to ingratiate himself with the landed interest by different means and on different principles. For instance, he is the first chancellor of the exchequer that ever attempted to keep the land tax at its highest rate in time of peace, as well as in time of war; that ever ventured to propose rendering that tax perpetual; and who not only insists on perpetuating the present unequal land tax at its highest rate, but also who threatens the landed interest with an unlimited addition to so heavy a burden. The additional tax, the foundation of which is so evidently laid in

this bill, may at first be low, call it one shilling, or even six-pence in the pound; but if the principle is once admitted, it will soon be found the readiest resource in all emergencies. We are told, that freehold in office is a better tenure than a freehold estate, and that taxes upon land furnish a security so infinitely preferable to every other, that by converting excise duties into taxes upon land, the public may gain one-fifth additional revenue. Can there be a stronger temptation to throw as heavy a load as possible upon land, and to exempt freehold in office from taxation? Does not the principle of this measure go to prove, that if 400,000*l.* can be gained by perpetuating the land tax of two millions, that a million would be gained by laying five millions upon land, two millions by laying ten millions, and that by laying twenty millions, four millions would be the profit of the exchequer? Here is a means of acquiring a great revenue, the practicability of which, if this plan succeeds, cannot be questioned, and which, if practicable, the necessities of an extravagant government may soon render indispensable.

The next objection that struck my mind was one of a political nature, but which I am happy to find is taken away by the amended bill, and therefore it is unnecessary to dwell much upon it. We all know, that by the union between England and Scotland, the proportion of land tax between the two countries is for ever ascertained. The one is to raise at the rate of nearly two millions, and the other about 48,000*l.* per annum, or in that ratio, for any greater or lesser sum. People are apt to say, that the burthen is extremely unequal. It is a part, however, of an indissoluble bargain between the two countries, which cannot now be altered. Besides, it can be proved, that the inequality is altogether owing to the superior agricultural legislation and police of Scotland. Let the English pass a general bill for inclosure, let them modify tythes so as to prevent their being a bar to improvement, let them restrain the poor-rates within moderate bounds, let them abolish any obnoxious remnants of the feudal system, and let the tenants have proper leases of their farms, and the land of England will soon be as cheaply taxed as that in Scotland. It is owing to the circumstances above alluded to that the rents of Scotland have proportionably increased more, under all the disadvantages of inferior

soil, of an inferior climate, of an inferior capital, and of inferior markets. Give England the same legal advantages which Scotland at present happily possesses, and its agricultural prosperity would increase in such a ratio, that the land tax it is now subject to would be to the full as low in England as in Scotland, and there would exist on that account, no jealousy between the two kingdoms. It is unnecessary, however, to dwell on an objection which has been already happily adverted to and removed.

Another objection arises from a clause in the amended bill, respecting which the right hon. gentleman had preserved, as long as possible, a cautious and prudent silence. I had remarked from the beginning, that he had never explained the nature of the commissioners whom he had proposed to intrust with the authority of selling the land tax; but the clause he has introduced is so exceptionable, that though it might be amended in a committee, I think it proper to take this opportunity of alluding to it. The commissioners are to be nominated by the Crown, and are to receive at the rate of three-pence in the pound on the amount of the land tax sold by them; that might extend, or be construed to extend, to one-eightieth part of the 40,000,000*l.* proposed to be raised by the sale of the land tax, or no less a sum than 500,000*l.* But that would be too absurd. An one-eightieth part, however, of the two millions, or 25,000*l.*, is an object which will require particular attention, should the bill be recommitted, and is an expense which ought certainly to be avoided.

But the objection which strikes my mind the most forcibly, is one of an agricultural nature, and it seems to me sufficient of itself to overturn the whole system. The object of the measure is, to tempt the country gentleman to lay out any money he may have in his possession, or any sum he can borrow, or can procure, by a sale of part of his estate, or mortgaging the whole of it, in purchasing his land tax. Can there be a more destructive policy, either for the individual, or for the public? If a landed proprietor has any money to spare, the proper mode for him to lay it out is, in the improvement of his estate; in that way he may gain, instead of 5, from 7 to 15, or even 20 per cent for his money, and by his improvements the public prosperity is, in various respects, infinitely augmented.

Population is increased, abundance of provisions is secured, important additions made to the revenue, nay, the great object of the bill itself, an increased price of stock, ultimately secured. All hopes of that sort, however, will be annihilated, at least for some time, if this measure succeeds; and if it does not succeed, are we not holding up delusive hopes to the country? As to the idea of the proprietor borrowing money, or selling a part of his estate to obtain it, I am persuaded that neither of those plans can be much relished by the landed interest. If money can be obtained in either way, let it be expended on improvement; if borrowed at 5 per cent, no advantage can be obtained from the transaction; if under 5 per cent, the money will probably be called up when it becomes scarcer and more valuable, and the proprietor will find himself involved in the greatest pecuniary difficulties. Selling a part of an estate is seldom eligible; it can only be thought of when there are detached spots, and in the case of settled estates, is attended with peculiar, indeed unsurmountable difficulties, and almost endless expense and litigation.

On the subject of improvement, it may not be improper briefly to state the various measures which have been adopted in different countries for its encouragement or otherwise, and by contrasting the one with the other we shall be able more clearly to see the hideousness of the present measure in its real colours. The best mode of encouraging improvements, is the one adopted by Frederic the Great, king of Prussia, who expended about two millions of German crowns, or three hundred thousand pounds sterling per annum, in promoting the improvement of his country, and the general comfort of its inhabitants. We are told, in particular, that he expended considerable sums of money in promoting even by premiums, the abolition of commons and the inclosure of lands. What a contrast between such a wise policy and the practice of this country, where the proprietors are not suffered to inclose and cultivate their own land, when they are ready and willing to do so, without being previously subjected to a heavy expense; and instead of grants to encourage them, they are required to pay considerable sums for a permission to begin their improvements! No wonder, therefore, that we were lately under the necessity of laying out, in public bounties, no less a sum than 570,000*l.* to encourage

the importation of foreign grain, partly from those very deserts which the immortal Frederic, by his superior policy, brought into a state of cultivation. But he wisely considered expense laid out for promoting improvement to be like manure spread upon the ground, which secured a more abundant harvest, and instead of impoverishing himself by that liberal policy, the result was, that though originally master of a country naturally barren, and without the advantages of extensive commerce or valuable manufactures, yet he raised it, by his genius and talents, and by his unceasing attention to its internal improvements, to be one of the most powerful countries in Europe; and though he maintained a numerous army of 200,000 men, and spared no expense in collecting great magazines of provisions, a formidable artillery, and all the other implements of war, yet he left behind him a treasure, in specie, of twelve millions sterling.—The second mode of encouraging improvement, is a measure which has been justified by experience in some countries, and which I hope will, some time or other, be adopted here, namely, that of lending money to proprietors of land at a low interest for the purpose of enabling them to improve it. This is a system that cannot be too strongly recommended to the attention of any government that is wealthy enough to attempt it. The third system is the one that has hitherto been adopted in this country, by which a tax on land has, indeed, been imposed, varying in point of amount from 1*s.* to 4*s.* in the pound, but always levying a proportionable sum from the same district. This is an indirect encouragement to improvement; for the rate being once fixed, any additional value to an estate, in consequence of expensive improvements, goes, with the exception of tithes, into the pocket of the proprietor; and this circumstance has certainly materially contributed to the improvement of this country. The next step to commence the progress of discouragement, is the one which the right hon. gentleman has in contemplation, and points out in this bill, namely, that of levying an equal land tax over the whole kingdom, varying, according to the alteration of income or annual value of an estate. It is evident that this must be an almost insurmountable check to every species of agricultural enterprise; for in the face of such a burthen, who will venture to lay out his money for the pur-

poses of improvement? But the summit of political absurdity, if the improvement of a country should be considered as an object worthy of consideration, is, the measure now under our discussion, by which, instead of granting money to the landed proprietor, or lending him sums at low interest, for promoting agricultural exertion, or imposing no additional burthen on improvement, but giving the whole benefit of it to the proprietor, it is proposed to take from him all the capital he has, or all the money he can procure, by any means, for the purpose of redeeming his land tax. A more effectual way of discouraging improvement could hardly be contrived. If it succeeds according to the intentions of the proposer, forty millions sterling would be paid by the landed interest for getting rid of this tax. Instead of that miserable mode of laying out such a sum of money, let us consider for a moment what would be the result of laying out forty millions on improving the territory of the country. The effect of such an event would be, not only making this country the garden of Europe, but also adding so much to its revenue and general prosperity, that we need not be apprehensive of wanting financial resources, or that our public credit could possibly be impaired. In fact, the difference between the two systems is shortly this: The right hon. gentleman wishes to support the funded at the expense of the landed interest; whereas I wish to promote the improvement of the country without taking away any thing from the funds, perfectly satisfied that, when the country prospers, no apprehension need to be entertained that the funded interest will not thence derive the most essential benefits.

I shall next proceed to consider the arguments which have been made use of in favour of this measure, namely, that it may add from 200,000*l.* to 400,000*l.* per annum to the revenue, and may take 80,000,000*l.* of 3 per cent stock out of the market. In regard to these supposed advantages, they entirely depend upon the possibility of carrying the measure into effect; where I consider the plan not only highly exceptionable, for the reasons I have already assigned, but, on its present footing, for the plan might be greatly improved, perfectly impracticable in itself, were it liable to no objection. There are but five descriptions of persons who are likely to purchase the land tax, namely, the landed proprietor himself,

public bodies and trustees, wealthy individuals in London, or their foreign correspondents, monied persons in the country, and opulent farmers. As to the first, it is on all hands admitted, that in consequence of various circumstances, on which it is unnecessary now to dwell, there are few if any landed proprietors who are in a situation to purchase their own land tax. Public bodies, or trustees acting for others, would hardly venture on such a speculation. Monied men in London, and still more the foreign capitalists with whom they correspond, are not so insensible to their own interests as to take 5 per cent when they can get 6, on security equally good, and infinitely more convenient, from the easiness of transfer, the regular payment of the interest, and the certainty with which it can be sold. In regard to monied men in the country, they are now as conversant in the stocks as the citizens of London themselves, and will not be easily tempted to give them up on terms so disadvantageous; besides, taking up the money in the country would have the effect of diminishing the manufacturing capital, and consequently the commercial prosperity of every part in the kingdom, which, in fact, according to a homely expression, would be killing the hen that lays the golden eggs. In regard to the former, two or three years ago, considerable sums were in the possession of that body of men, but from the low price of grain, and the importation of such enormous quantities from foreign countries, their profits and their wealth have been considerably diminished; besides it would rather be an awkward circumstance for a proprietor to pay a tax on his own tenants; it would occasion such a jealousy between the two orders as would necessarily be productive of many unpleasant consequences. On these grounds I think the measure so extremely impracticable that no material advantage, as it now stands, can be expected from it.

These, Sir, are some of the principal observations which have occurred to me on this important question, and which I have endeavoured to condense as much as I could, not wishing to prevent the House from hearing other gentlemen as early as possible, who may be desirous of stating their sentiments on so interesting a topic; and, on the whole, considering the extent and magnitude of this subject, can the House seriously determine to hurry such a measure through in the course of the

present session? The bill is now brought to all the perfection of which probably it is capable. Let it be circulated, in that state over the whole kingdom. If the measure should then meet with general concurrence, let it be passed early in the course of the next session. The plan cannot possibly make any progress till the 25th of March next, because it is universally acknowledged that very few proprietors, indeed, can purchase their land tax; and till then, no other party can interfere. Let the 25th of March, 1799, be fixed upon by a resolution of the House as the day when at any rate the proprietor must decide; and if the system is to be carried through, not an hour will be lost. For my part, were I a friend to the measure, I certainly would insist upon this delay as the most likely means of making the public feel any zeal or anxiety in its favour; and if it were to pass, of rendering it ultimately successful; whereas if we now rashly give it our sanction, the mischief is done, and never can be repaired.

The question being put, That the Speaker do now leave the chair, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Peel - - - - -	}	124
		Mr. Burdon - - - - -		
NOES	{	Sir John Sinclair - - - - -	}	27
		Mr. Jolliffe - - - - -		

May 30. On the motion, that the bill be now read a third time,

Lord Sheffield renewed his objections to it and moved, that instead of "now," be inserted the words "upon this day three months."

Mr. *Jolliffe* opposed the bill as fraudulent, unconstitutional, and unjust.

Sir *R. C. Glynn* thought the bill would be beneficial to the country at large, and ought not to be opposed upon motives of private economy.

Mr. *Jones* thought there was much danger in precipitating a measure, which involved such various and complex interests. By perpetuating the land tax, the House was consenting to keep up a perpetual standing army.

Mr. *Shaw Lefevre* saw no grounds of apprehension, that hereafter a new land tax would be raised on the footing of an equal assessment. He would, therefore, support the bill.

Mr. *Martin* opposed the bill as unconstitutional, but the necessities of the

times would induce him to give it his concurrence.

Mr. *Biddulph* reprobated the bill, as highly unconstitutional, in its principle, and atrociously fraudulent in its operation.

Mr. *Pierrepoint* said, that the present measure if put into execution, would grievously affect the small landholders. He thought it would be a fairer way to annul the present land tax, and to propose six or seven shillings in the pound, if necessary, to answer the present exigencies.

The *Solicitor General* denied that the effect of this measure would be to remove any constitutional check on the disposition of the annual revenue arising from the land tax, because there was a provision in the bill, to secure another fund, for the same purpose; this equivalent revenue would be equally liable to an annual vote of parliament, and was designed to give the same constitutional check. With regard to the idea of making an equal charge upon all property, he considered it to be perfectly chimerical; but an equal charge upon income, he thought practicable.

Sir *Francis Burdett* said:—Although I cannot refrain from delivering my sentiments upon a question so interesting to the landholders of this country. However much gentlemen may differ with me on other subjects—however much they may disapprove of those general principles of liberty to which I have declared my attachment—I hope that they will agree with me on the present occasion. "Look well to the step you are about to take," is a trite maxim, but a just one: and on the present occasion, I would repeat it to all landholders—Let us stand on the ancient way, and look to the prospect before us. This may be called a bill for redeeming the land tax; but it is nothing less than a bill for confiscating all the landed property of the country. It is of a piece with the plundering system of his majesty's ministers: for a corrupt and extravagant government knows no bounds to its demands. But let us look to the real situation of the landholder of this country: let us consider the many burthens he is already peculiarly subjected to. In addition to the land tax, he pays several impositions which the other classes of the community are not liable to pay. The landholder, besides the land tax, pays the church tythes and poor-rates. The duty on horses used in agriculture, too, falls

upon the landholders. The burthen of the Yeomen Cavalry falls exclusively upon them; and at the same time they pay their proportion of every other tax that is imposed. It is idle to talk of making a distinction between the landed and monied interests. We do not make it. The distinction does and must exist. It would be well if gentlemen looked a little more to their own interest; for that is the best way of securing the interest of the public. There are many other means by which money could be raised for the public, besides this. The sale of the crown lands would produce a much larger sum. Another object of supply, which, in a war peculiarly styled a war for religion, appears to me a very proper one, is, the revenue of the church. This is a source which I think might very well afford something for the relief of the country. Another method of procuring money for the exigencies of the state readily presents itself; that is, the abolition, during the war at least, of all sinecure places and pensions, and imposing a tax on all emoluments. If any of these means were resorted to, it would prove more efficient than the present measure, and would make no addition to the distress of the country. The burthens on the landholder are already too great. He is unable to keep his place in society; while new men, who grow in wealth as the country declines, are every day arising round him; while public rewards are not given for any good done to the country, and while the only means he has left of repairing a decayed fortune are, to disgrace himself by a constant servility to the crown, and an abject desertion of the people. With regard to the constitutional point which is involved in the present question, I shall make only one observation. I would ask the House, if there be no difference between the control which it has over a casual tax, and that which it has over one which is permanent like the land tax? Is there no difference between the landholder retaining in his own hands a direct and certain check, and his having the semblance of one which must be uncertain as to its extent and application? And here I do not speak only of that constitutional check which the parliament has upon the crown, but that which the landholder ought to have over both the crown and parliament. I should not think I had done my duty to my country, if I hesitated to make every exertion in my power to prevent an evil, the extent

of which no man can foresee, under which the latest posterity may groan, and which is pregnant with ruin to civil and political liberty.

After some farther debate, the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Sir R. C. Glynn - - -	}	135
		Mr. Shaw Lefevre - - -		
NOES	{	Lord Sheffield - - -	}	33
		Mr. Jolliffe - - -		

The bill was then read a third time.

Debate in the Commons on the Alien Bill.] April 24. The House having resolved itself into a Committee on the Alien bill,

Mr. Windham (Secretary at war) remarked on the vulgar prejudices against which gentlemen ought to guard on a subject of this nature. Thus there was a sort of prevalent error concerning every foreigner, that he must be a Frenchman, and concerning every Frenchman, that he must be an emigrant; thus it had been stated to that effect in the House concerning a person apprehended, who, it appeared, was neither a Frenchman nor an emigrant, and, as it turned out, had not been guilty of any crime. This was a reason why the committee should be cautious how they confounded the innocent with the guilty. There were other mistaken opinions entertained, and, he feared, gaining ground in this country; thus some were apt to see emigrants in the light of persons coming into this country in distress; and simply in this view, it was surely no light matter to expel persons merely because they were distressed, nor from mere surmises or fancied apprehensions of danger. The body of French emigrants ought, in his opinion, to be considered as consisting of men, many of whom had made great sacrifices for their loyalty and attachment to their ancient government; many of them the respectable representatives of all that remained of the clergy, nobility, magistracy, and proprietary of the land. They had a claim to be considered, not merely as suffering individuals, but also in their collective and representative capacity, which made them of still greater consequence. He was afraid there were many in this country, who, in the days of the prosperity of such persons, would have been ambitious to have been introduced to, and cordially received by them, now forgot all this, and

viewed these same individuals merely as persons in reduced circumstances. He was happy, however, to say, that this treatment was not universal. To the honour of the sex he must remark, that ladies of the first rank, character, and respectability in this country, had shown their sympathy and liberality towards those of their own sex, who in France had seen better days. He thought the country bound not upon light grounds to withhold that asylum and assistance they had hitherto received from this country; for what would this be doing but to put them in a worse situation than if they had never been taken under our protection? Those who wished the expulsion of the emigrants, did so from an apprehension of danger to this country. For his part, he could entertain little or no apprehension of danger from this quarter, for of the emigrants, about one half were priests, besides women and children; the remaining number was inconsiderable. A common prejudice was entertained against them, because they preferred France to this country, and their ancient constitution to our own: but this, in his opinion, was no objection to them. It would, indeed, be extraordinary if the case were otherwise, as well as unreasonable to require of them to sacrifice all their ancient opinions and prejudices, or to expect that a Frenchman, for the allowance of a shilling a day, would sacrifice what he considered his birth-right, for a mess of pottage. But though it was not to be expected from them that they should prefer this country to their own, yet no inference could be deduced from this why they should forfeit the confidence, liberality, and humanity of the nation and parliament? We certainly had a right to expect that they would not betray or sell the country which sheltered them; that they would not take part with those who at present were our enemies, supposing that they did not co-operate with us. He would ask, what instances could be produced, during the long period of the present war, of these emigrants proving untrue, or betraying whatever trust had been reposed in them? They had been trusted upon some occasions necessarily, and pretty highly. They composed a part of the army of the duke of York upon the continent. Had they proved betrayers of their trust then, or been deficient in their duty? Were the corps of Rohan, of La Chatre, of Montalembert,

&c. false to their employers? In the army of the prince of Condé whole ranks were to be found composed of persons who had been loaded with honours for services done their own or other countries; the army of the Austrians had been saved by the exertions of this corps, who had many of them gallantly fallen whilst defending their allies. After alluding to the unfortunate affair of Quiberon, which he considered to have occurred by surprise rather than by treachery, he proceeded to notice a question, that was sometimes asked, as alluding to the emigrants, namely, were there not spies in this country? He would answer by saying there were just as many as the Directory of France chose to employ. Nor if instances of this sort should be found amongst the emigrants would it be any matter of surprise. There were also traitors in this country; but would it be justifiable on this account to proscribe a whole body of men who had been taken under the protection of this country, and who had not abused the confidence reposed in them? but it might be questioned, whether, in case of danger from a successful landing of the enemy, they might not wish to save their own lives by joining the enemy? He would only say, this was a trial they had not been called to; but in similar instances in other countries, they had shown their regard to their honour to be equal, if not superior to that of their lives. If this bill were intended merely as a prevention to guard against any machinations that might be formed to our prejudice by any of the emigrants, he could not object to it; and he knew that it was the wish of those emigrants whom he had been speaking of, that great distinctions should be made, that the wheat should be winnowed from the chaff, and the government of the country have the means of expelling unworthy characters. A pernicious spirit had gone abroad, which, as it would lead to palpable injustice towards the emigrants, should be combated. Was it a reason, because they had been driven from every country in Europe where the French arms had gained influence, and on account of their hostility to the present French government, that they should also be driven from this country? Some worthless characters might be found amongst the emigrants, as was the case in every community; but this did not extend to the general body, in many of whom (he meant the French nobility) he could

place all possible confidence with regard to his own life, and what he did not value less, the safety and honour of his country. The body of emigrants were entitled to the protection and favour of this country. It would be setting a most dangerous example to hold up this to view, that those who had remained faithful to the constitution of their country, should be discarded and expelled; nor did it become the wisdom and prudence of that House to give countenance to the impression, that in case of an invasion, the French emigrants would turn upon their benefactors. Were this impression to gain ground, it might endanger the safety and lives of this unfortunate description of persons.

Mr. Tierney said:—In consequence of the vote I gave on the Habeas Corpus Suspension bill, the right hon. gentleman has thought proper to assert, that I am at last satisfied there are traitors in this country. Now I really think, that this is peculiarly inhuman to one of the gentlemen now confined under a charge of high treason and to myself—I mean Mr. O'Connor. I have long lived in habits of friendship with that gentleman, and I take this opportunity of avowing that I am still his friend. I declare that I never met with a man of more intelligence, or more amiable manners, in the course of my life. In all the conversations I ever had with him, I found nothing in him that was not friendly to the constitution of this country. Perhaps, by what I am now saying, I may raise a cry against myself; but I do declare, that his political notions were always consonant to my own; and until those shall be proved to be traitorous, I have a right to suppose that Mr. O'Connor is innocent. I hope I shall always have reason to look back to the friendship which has subsisted between Mr. O'Connor and myself with pride; but, were he proved a traitor, I should have reason to look back to it with regret and shame. Let not, then, the secretary at war say, that I am satisfied that gentleman is a traitor to his country. I am surprised he should have so misunderstood the reason I gave for my vote the other night. All I said was, that a body of gentlemen, upon their oath, had declared there were grounds for a suspicion of traitorous proceedings. If there be a man whom I cannot think a traitor, it is Mr. Arthur O'Connor. Should he be acquitted, it will be one of the happiest moments of my life, and I shall renew our acquaintance with the

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greatest satisfaction and pleasure: though, perhaps, the right hon. gentleman would then consider him as nothing more than “an acquitted felon.”

The bill went through the committee.

King's Message relative to a Loan to Ireland.] April 24. Mr. Pitt presented the following Message from his Majesty:

“GEORGE R.

“His Majesty recommends it to the House of Commons, to consider of enabling his Majesty to make remittances from time to time, to be applied to his service in Ireland, in such manner as shall be approved by the parliament of that kingdom, to an amount not exceeding two millions, on provision being made, by the parliament of Ireland, for defraying the interest and charges of a loan to that amount.

“G. R.”

Ordered to be referred to the Committee of Supply.

Arrest of Mr. Arthur O'Connor at Maidstone.] May 23. Lord Holland said, he felt it his duty to call their lordships' attention to certain circumstances which had recently taken place, and which, if correctly stated, were such as ought to be marked with the most decided reprobation. They were circumstances highly inhuman and atrocious. He thought it incumbent on him to submit them to the House, that, if they were false, his majesty's ministers might take the opportunity of contradicting them; but if, on the contrary, they were true, he could not find terms strong enough to mark the disgust and horror with which they impressed his mind. If, upon a closer investigation of the subject, he should find out any constitutional mode of bringing the consideration before the House, he should trouble their lordships with a regular motion. The circumstances to which he alluded were the following: After Mr. O'Connor had been honourably acquitted at Maidstone, some of the Bow-street officers immediately proceeded to arrest him in court, in pursuance of a warrant, signed by one of his majesty's secretaries of state, and dated as far back as the 22d of March last. Such a mode of proceeding, he trusted, would be reckoned both irregular and absurd; and if the account which he had received was true, he had no hesitation to add, that it ought to be considered as malignant. In bestowing that epithet on the measure to which he

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adverted, he felt himself supported by the decision of the legislature. He referred to a clause in the Habeas Corpus Suspension act, which enacted that nothing therein contained should relate to persons in custody at the time in which it was passed, and expressly proved that they should be tried as if no such bill had ever passed. If there was any thing moderate and candid in that act, if any thing could be called so in a bill which had passed in so intemperate a manner, it was, in his opinion, that particular clause. He would contend, if there existed a warrant against Mr. O'Connor, signed by one of the secretaries of state, and dated the 22d of March, which was not put into execution, that then the person so in custody would be placed in the same state as if the clause to which he referred had never been made; for, by keeping the warrant, it seemed merely to be reserved for the purpose of answering the end of another process. He therefore wished to give his majesty's ministers an opportunity of vindicating themselves. If the circumstances which he had stated were false, they would be enabled to contradict them. If, however, his account was correct, he should declare, that the system of terror was predominant, and that there was no security for the person or property of any man in the kingdom.

The *Lord Chancellor* said, the conduct of the noble lord was contrary to the established rules of the House. The noble lord had delivered a speech, pointing at nothing, ending with nothing, and his statements had been both intemperate and ill-advised. He was a young member of that House, and he would possibly receive and follow better information. He therefore hoped, out of respect to him, that he would endeavour for the future to acquire that necessary information, before he proceeded to throw out reflections that were altogether groundless. If he had consulted any persons of mature judgment, they would have cautioned him against entering into the discussion of a subject which, when investigated, would turn out directly contrary to the end which he had in view; for, instead of affording any ground of censure against his majesty's ministers, it would be acknowledged by all mankind that they had acted with every degree of fairness and candour throughout the whole of the business. The fact was, that a warrant signed by one of the secretaries of state, and dated the 22d of

March, had been produced against Mr. O'Connor after his acquittal; but the inference drawn by the noble lord was evidently erroneous; for it was necessary the noble lord should be informed of another circumstance, and then he would draw a very different conclusion. The Habeas Corpus Suspension bill could have nothing to do with the warrant; for though the clause alluded to stated that persons should be tried as if no such bill had passed, yet Mr. O'Connor was liable to be detained for an act of treason committed in another part of the country. If that act had been committed in Kent, he could not have been tried there. But he would put it to the young mind of the noble lord, what would have been the case if the warrant had been actually served, and had proclaimed that another charge of treason was preferred upon facts which had taken place somewhere else? He would put it to the candour of the noble lord, whether, if his majesty's ministers had published the warrant, they would not have added to the charge under which Mr. O'Connor already laboured? He would put it to the liberality of the noble lord, whether he ought not to tread back the ground on which he had come forward, and retract the statements which he had so inadvertently made, on account of those reasons which could not but flash conviction upon his mind? He should not enter into what had recently passed in a court of justice. Circumstances had taken place there, that were highly improper and irregular; they were indecent and punishable—for an attempt had been made to get away by connivance before a regular discharge was made out.

Viscount *Bulkeley* said, that every measure ought to be taken to prosecute Mr. O'Connor, who was highly dangerous, and to whose acquittal the disaffected in Ireland looked with peculiar interest.

The *Lord Chancellor* said, he really wished to stop any farther discussion on the business. It was highly important not to enter into it; as, though Mr. O'Connor had been acquitted, another charge had been brought forward against him.

Bill for better Manning the Navy.]
May 25. Mr. *Pitt* moved for leave to bring in a bill for the more effectual Manning of his Majesty's Navy; at the same time intimating, that, as the present alarming situation of the country made it necessary that this measure should be

passed without any delay, he should wish that the bill might this day proceed through its different stages, with a suitable pause at each, if required, and that it should be sent to the Lords for their concurrence.

Mr. *Tierney* complained of the precipitate manner in which the right hon. gentleman had called upon the House to adopt the measure proposed. He had heard no arguments, that proved its propriety; he knew of no sudden emergency that urged its necessity; even if he had, some time ought to have been allowed him to weigh the force of such arguments, and examine the nature of such an emergency, before he proceeded to give three or four votes on a measure of which no notice had been given. If the right hon. gentleman persisted in hurrying the bill through the House in the manner proposed, he must give it his decided negative, however reluctantly he opposed any measure that was said to be necessary to the safety of the country. For, from what he had lately seen, he must view all the measures of ministers as hostile to the liberty of the subject; and the present measure he regarded with peculiar jealousy, as it went directly to rob them of the few remaining privileges they were still permitted to enjoy.

Mr. *Pitt* replied, that if every measure adopted against the designs of France, was to be considered as hostile to the liberty of this country, then, indeed, his idea of liberty differed very widely from that which seemed to be entertained by the hon. gentleman. The House would recollect, however, that he had given notice of the present motion. When the hon. gentleman complained of the manner in which the bill was to be hurried through the House, and hinted that it was too frequently resorted to, he saw the suspension of the Habeas Corpus act was lurking in his mind. The hon. gentleman would have a long notice given of the present motion, and would retard its progress through the House. He acknowledges that, were it not passed in a day, those whom it might concern, might elude its effect, thus assigning himself the reason for its immediate adoption. But if the measure be necessary, and that a notice of it would enable its effect to be eluded, how can the hon. gentleman's opposition to it be accounted for, but from a desire to obstruct the defence of the country?

Mr. *Tierney* called the right hon. gen-

tleman to order. This language was surely not parliamentary. He therefore applied to the chair for protection.

The *Speaker* said, that whatever tended to cast a personal imputation upon any hon. gentleman for words spoken, was certainly disorderly and unparliamentary: it was for the right hon. gentleman to explain his meaning, and for the House to consider whether the words used conveyed such an imputation. They would wait to hear the right hon. gentleman's explanation.

Mr. *Pitt* said, he was afraid the House must wait a long while before they heard such an explanation as was demanded of him, for he must adhere to his former declaration (which he repeated). He knew that he had no right to impute motives to the language used by the hon. gentleman, however impossible it might be not to suspect motives; but he knew that he had a right to state such arguments as appeared to him conclusive against those adopted by the hon. gentleman, and whilst he would submit these to the judgment of the House, he must say, that he would neither retract from, nor farther explain, his former expressions.*

Debate in the Commons on the Arrests of Messrs. Arthur and Roger O'Connor.] June 11. Mr. *St. John* rose to make his promised motion and said:—Certain circumstances have induced me to bring in question the warrants under which the unfortunate and innocent gentlemen, whose case I shall submit to the House, were apprehended. The subject is of the greatest importance, since it relates to the liberty of the subject. It is my purpose to inquire, first, how far the steps taken by government in this case are legal

* In consequence of what passed between Mr. *Pitt* and Mr. *Tierney* on this occasion, a meeting took place on the 27th, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, on Putney-heath. Mr. *Pitt* was accompanied by Mr. *Ryder*, and Mr. *Tierney* by sir *George Walpole*. After some ineffectual attempts on the part of the seconds, to prevent farther proceedings, the parties took their ground at the distance of twelve paces. A case of pistols was fired at the same moment without effect; a second case was also fired in the same way, Mr. *Pitt* firing his pistol in the air: the seconds then interfered, and insisted that the matter should go no farther, it being their decided opinion that sufficient satisfaction had been given, and that the business was ended with perfect honour to both parties.

and, secondly, if they be legal, how far they are consistent with those feelings which ever ought to accompany all endeavours for enforcing justice. In inquiring how far the steps that have been taken are legal, it is necessary to consider, first, what alteration has taken place in the law which secures the personal liberty of every subject. Under the impression of a conspiracy being on foot against the government, a bill passed this House in a day, which is improperly called "A bill for suspending the Habeas Corpus act." It is no such thing; but whenever great powers are invested in the government, it is the duty of this House to watch the execution of them with peculiar care. An hon. gentleman, when this subject was alluded to said, "Only wait until the trials at Maidstone are over, and you will then be convinced that a conspiracy for overthrowing the constitution exists, the ramifications of which extend from one end of the island to the other." Now gentlemen have waited until the trials at Maidstone are over; and, so far from finding that this conspiracy existed, it fully appears, that there was nothing like it made out on the part of the crown.—In determining upon the exercise of the extraordinary powers vested in government, we are called upon to consider the mode in which these powers were given; but before I come to that part of the question, I think it will be proper to inquire what are the powers which have been given? The Habeas Corpus bill, which passed in 1679, contained two distinct parts: one relates to imprisonments; the other, to crimes committed abroad. Here Mr. St. John read the 12th clause: "12. And for preventing illegal imprisonments in prisons beyond the seas, be it farther enacted, that no subject of this realm that now is, or hereafter shall be, an inhabitant or resiant of this kingdom of England, dominion of Wales, or town of Berwick upon Tweed, shall or may be sent prisoner into Scotland, Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey, Tangier, or into parts, garrisons, islands, or places beyond the seas, which are, or at any time hereafter shall be, within or without the dominion of his majesty, his heirs or successors; and that every such imprisonment is hereby enacted and adjudged to be illegal, &c." The clause stands just as it did; and therefore with regard to the situation in which these gentlemen stand, they are in the same

state as if the Suspension act had never passed.—Having stated this clause, it will be necessary for me to state a subsequent one—it is the 16th. "16. Provided also, that if any person or persons at any time resiant within this realm shall have committed any capital offence in Scotland or Ireland, or any of the islands or foreign plantations of the king, his heirs or successors, where he or she ought to be tried for such offence, such person or persons may be sent to such place, their to receive such trial in such manner as the same might have been used before the making of this act; any thing herein contained to the contrary notwithstanding."

I shall endeavour to show, under this and the former clause, that his majesty's secretary of state has violated this law. I will show, not only that Mr. Roger O'Connor had committed no crime in Ireland, but that it is morally and physically impossible that he could have committed that for which he was apprehended. To state this matter clearly to the House, it is necessary that I should go back to the time when the French fleet appeared off Bantry Bay. It is well known that nothing could exceed the loyalty displayed by this part of Ireland on that occasion. Mr. Roger O'Connor, who had considerable property in that neighbourhood, was not behind hand in demonstrating his earnest desire to defeat the intentions of the enemy. His house lay in the way of the troops on their march to Bantry Bay, where he entertained them as they passed, and did every thing in his power to facilitate their progress. The government were not insensible of what Mr. O'Connor had done, and he received the thanks of the Irish ministers. It was not long, however, before he was destined to suffer persecution from those who had thus thought proper to express their approbation of his conduct. In the April following, it was supposed by the government of Ireland, that the principles of the United Irishmen had extended themselves through a great portion of the people. Mr. Roger O'Connor was suspected to be attached to them; and, to avoid suspicion, he came to England, and resided here until June. In May, the lord lieutenant of Ireland issued a proclamation, promising pardon to all persons who should take the oaths of allegiance, and give security for their future good behaviour. On the 19th of June, Mr.

Roger O'Connor returned to Ireland, and availed himself of this proclamation, with the terms of which he strictly complied. He was, however, apprehended, under a charge of high treason, on the 11th of July, carried to Dublin, and examined before the privy council. On that occasion, Mr. Pelham told him, that he was convinced the charge which had been made against him was unfounded: and Mr. O'Connor immediately left Dublin, and returned to his country house. While he lived there, the assizes happened at Cork: having been, as most gentlemen of Ireland are, educated to the law, he attended these assizes in the way of his profession. It happened, fortunately for those he defended, but unfortunately for himself, that they were all acquitted. His conduct on this occasion had, perhaps, given offence to the Irish administration; for he was soon after apprehended again on a new charge of treason, and taken to Dublin. After a long confinement in Cork gaol, he was honourably acquitted—so honourably, that an hon. gentleman, who is now absent, thought proper to make it the subject of eulogium in this House; but while that hon. gentleman was exerting his eloquence in this handsome manner, a warrant was made out for apprehending Mr. O'Connor. The moment he was acquitted, he set off in the greatest haste for this country, and soon reached London. The cause of this eagerness obviously was, the situation in which his brother was placed. The first step he took, on his arrival in London, was to write to the duke of Portland. Now, surely, it could not be a presumption of high treason, that a man writes to the secretary of state—a person guilty of that crime would most likely endeavour to conceal himself with the greatest care from the executive government. He was the first person who informed the duke of Portland of his being in London; and the consequence of this information was, that an order was issued to take him into custody once more, under a charge of high treason. I am told he remonstrated with the noble duke. He stated his own ill state of health, the ill health of a child whom he had not seen for a long time before, and the probability that he might be wanted as a witness on his brother's trial. These were remonstrances which might have been expected to have had some weight; but they were unavailing and the order for his leaving London was made out on

the same day. Arrived again in Dublin, an interview took place between this gentleman and Mr. Cooke. I beg leave to call the attention of the House to what passed on this occasion; for, if my information be correct, what I am going to relate is of very great consequence. Mr. Cooke distinctly stated (and Mr. Cooke must be supposed to be speaking the sentiments of the Irish government), that Mr. Roger O'Connor was an innocent man. He said "We have no charge against you; you wish to live in England—that is our wish also." Now, if these facts be true, have I or have I not made out Mr. Roger O'Connor's case to be such as puts the secretary of state under the necessity of defending himself from the charge of having violated the clause of the Habeas Corpus act, which I read to the House? Under what circumstances was the Habeas Corpus act passed? It is well known that it was always the practice of those ministers who wished to possess more power than the laws and the constitution gave them, to oppress those they suspected would oppose their measures. It was frequently their practice, where they wished to get rid of particular men, to send them out of the kingdom under charges of treason. To prevent such enormities, the clause I have quoted was passed; and those who recollect the history of the times of Charles 1st and 2nd, will be well aware of the dangers which may arise from its violation. But to return to Mr. O'Connor: he had hardly received this assurance from Mr. Cooke, when there came a warrant from the English secretary of state to apprehend him—to apprehend a man against whom the Irish government had no charge whatever! I know it may be said here, that if Mr. Arthur O'Connor wanted his brother to be a witness, this step enabled him to obtain his evidence; but how did it happen that this idea came into the mind of the secretary of state? It was evidently because Mr. Roger O'Connor had stated that he would, perhaps, be a material witness on his brother's trial. These were the last words he had used before he was sent off from England. The secretary of state very well knew, that if it came out on the trial that he had sent him off to Ireland after he had stated that he would probably be a material witness, such conduct would have been considered very cruel and unjust by the public. Upon due recollection, therefore, it seems it

was thought best to bring him back. Being brought back in this manner, he remained here until he was again sent to Dublin by the warrant of the secretary of state in company with his brother.

I now come to the case of Mr. Arthur O'Connor. The part he took in the Irish parliament is too notorious to require any description. It is well known that he made a celebrated speech, which attracted much public attention. He afterwards vacated his seat, and offered himself as a candidate at the next general election, upon pure, constitutional and independent principles. In consequence of his firm opposition to the measures of the Irish government, he became an object of their suspicion, and was subjected to a very rigorous imprisonment. It came out upon the trial at Maidstone, that he was twice fired at in gaol by a sentinel, and that afterwards he never dared to go to the window of his dungeon; yet, notwithstanding this severe treatment, he was at length suffered to go forth an innocent man. The doors of his dungeon were thrown open, after he had suffered an illegal imprisonment for six or seven months. I say, illegal, because no man can consider such an imprisonment followed by no trial in any other light. Upon being discharged from prison, he remained for some time in Dublin, from which he came to London. The circumstances that attended his apprehension and trial in this country are well known to the House, and I need not recapitulate them. His acquittal had scarcely been announced when he was apprehended on a warrant from the secretary of state and sent to Ireland. Now let it be supposed, that all I have stated to the House is strictly true—if it appear that the 12th clause of the act of Habeas Corpus has been violated in the persons of these gentlemen, and that the 16th clause certainly cannot apply to Mr. Roger O'Connor, I shall, under these circumstances, be warranted in maintaining, that the administration which commits such acts is not influenced by the spirit of justice, but by the worst of passions. It may, perhaps, be said, that it is as competent for government to lodge a detainer on high treason as any other prosecution in cases of felony. This right I do not pretend to dispute; but is it not something remarkable, that there is no instance of this right having been exercised from the date at which the statute of Edward 3rd was passed down to

the present times—a period of 400 years? There is one case only which bears any resemblance to the present, and that is lord Strafford's. When the Commons impeached that nobleman, they failed to convince the Lords of his criminality, and there was no verdict; the House of Lords did not pronounce Not Guilty—but Not Guilty was pronounced at Maidstone. Having failed in their first attempt, the House of Commons made the pretence of discovering another scrap of treason, and brought in a bill of attainder, under which lord Strafford was convicted. This is the only case which can be resorted to by administration as a precedent. Will any man, then, say that there is not much cause for alarm when we see such a change taking place, such a bold deviation from the mild practice of our ancestors? That which was never done by Henry 8th, by Charles 1st, Charles 2nd, nor by James 2nd,—that which was not done in the sanguinary periods of 1715 and 1745—that which was never thought of during any rebellion that ever happened in this country—that which was not done in the American war—that which never was done at any former period of our history, his majesty's ministers have now thought proper to do.

Notwithstanding the light in which I view this transaction, I do not mean to move for any censure on the noble duke. All I ask is, a parliamentary inquiry as to the nature of the warrant under which Mr. O'Connor was apprehended. The question is of the first importance; for there is nothing we ought to be more jealous of than any infringement upon the liberty of the subject. Let us recollect the struggles that were made by our ancestors to establish the rights their posterity have enjoyed. English liberty may be dated from the signing of Magna Charta; but it was afterwards better defined, and more completely secured by acts of parliament. The desire of infringing the liberties of the people which was testified by Charles 1st and James 2nd created a jealousy of liberty in the people in proportion to the efforts those monarchs made to destroy it, which led to great convulsions in the state. The petition of rights claimed what is contained in the 12th clause of the Habeas Corpus act; and the 16th of Charles 1st, I think, contained a similar provision; but the unwise policy which directed the councils of that unhappy monarch did not suffer the law to operate. The consequence was, that

the grand rebellion succeeded. Charles 1st ascended the scaffold; and after many changes and much bloodshed, Charles 2nd was restored. There was still wanting something to fix more precisely the liberty of the subject with regard to the question now before us; and I think it was owing to a speech made in Guildhall, by a person of the name of Jenks, that we are indebted for the law as it now stands. Tyrannical ministers are never at a loss to find proper instruments for their professions. Jenks was imprisoned on account of this speech; and lord Nottingham refused to issue a writ of Habeas Corpus in the vacation time. To this circumstance we owe the present act. Though an individual only should suffer, the House ought not to be the less jealous of the act of the crown. When Hampden resisted the payment of ship money, every inhabitant of England resisted in him. If these two gentlemen are apprehended upon the false statement of having committed a crime against the state, and transported to Ireland, what has happened to them may happen to any of us. But, suppose there were in their case some suspicious circumstances, calculated to give a colour to the transaction, the dangerous consequences of permitting such a practice to pass without inquiry would be the same: for what persons would government first select in order to begin to infringe the rights of the people? They would select those against whom there might be some degree of public prejudice; and having got a precedent, they would then apply the maxim generally as they pleased. I shall first move for a copy of the warrant under which Mr. Roger O'Connor was arrested. I will follow that by a similar motion with regard to his brother. Should I be successful in these motions, I will next move for extracts of all communications from lord Camden to his majesty's ministers, containing charges of treason against Roger and Arthur O'Connor. This will bring the point directly to an issue between us. If no charges of treason can be produced, the whole affair is undoubtedly illegal, and the secretary of state will be liable to the penalties which the law inflicts in such cases. I now move, "That there be laid before this House Copies of all Warrants from the duke of Portland for apprehending Roger O'Connor, esq. for sending him to Ireland, or for bringing the said Roger O'Connor, esq. from Ireland to England."

The *Attorney General* said, he should oppose the motion, because he thought that it was hostile to the interests of justice, and inconsistent with the interests of those persons in whose behalf it was stated to have been made. The hon. gentleman had termed those two persons, unfortunate, innocent, and respectable persons: he did not mean to discuss the question, whether or not they were entitled to those epithets. Of one of those gentlemen he knew nothing; of the other it was not fit that he should say any thing, except that in his official capacity he had prosecuted him for high treason, and that upon an examination of the case, the jury said he was not guilty. The circumstances attending that trial were before the country, and every man might make his own observations upon it; for his own part, he should not make any. He should now state a few facts, in order that the House might arrive at a correct conclusion. Arthur O'Connor, one of the persons to whom this motion alluded, had, it appeared, been tried in a certain county of Great Britain, for a certain offence charged to have been committed in Great Britain. At the conclusion of that trial, however, in which he was acquitted, he was apprehended again upon a warrant, for the issuing of which he was bound to suppose there was sufficient reason. He apprehended that it was impossible for any person to deny, that if there existed any ground for apprehending Mr. O'Connor, and for sending him to Ireland, that he might legally be apprehended and sent to Ireland. It appeared that the secretary of state had apprehended Mr. O'Connor, and sent him to Ireland, and *prima facie* he was bound to suppose, that the secretary of state had acted right. With respect to Mr. Roger O'Connor, he should only say, that, either having been acquitted, or never having been accused (it made no difference in the argument), he was in point of fact in this kingdom, and was arrested by virtue of a warrant from the secretary of state, and sent into Ireland. Upon this fact he should only observe that the secretary of state could not issue a warrant for the apprehension of any person unless there was some charge made against him. The hon. gentleman had made some observations upon the Habeas Corpus act, and had passed many eulogiums upon it; no man could agree more heartily than he did in setting a high value upon that act, but it

had nothing to do with the case of the two gentlemen in question. He thought it a most important circumstance, that the hon. gentleman had been able to prove that the bill which had lately passed for suspending in part the Habeas Corpus act, did not apply to the case of the Messrs. O'Connors; because, during the whole time those two persons were in England, they had not thought proper to apply for a writ of Habeas Corpus. They might by applying for a writ of Habeas Corpus, have had the legality of their detention inquired into by a court of law, which was the proper place to discuss this question. This measure either was not thought of by those gentlemen and their friends, or else they were of opinion that there was no legal ground for making it: for in point of fact, no such application was made. The hon. gentleman had alluded to that part of the act which relates to sending persons beyond the seas; but he was sure the hon. gentleman's good sense would, upon a little reflexion, convince him that he had not read the act correctly. The clause he alluded to was one which imposed the heaviest penalties upon every person who shall send a subject of this country into any foreign country: and yet, though the punishment to be inflicted upon the person so offending is severe to an uncommon degree, the hon. gentleman thought he was doing justice when he called upon parliament to say that the secretary of state was involved in all the consequences of a *premunire*, without giving him the benefit which belonged to every subject, of having his case examined and decided upon by a court of justice and a jury. If any person entrusted with great power should act unjustly, ought the House of Commons to try him? Certainly not: that was the province of a court of justice. If the hon. gentleman had said that he intended to impeach the secretary of state, then, indeed, his conduct would have been intelligible, but the hon. gentleman had expressed no such intention; his object was to make the proceeding of that House a kind of auxiliary to his desire of involving the secretary in the penalties of a *premunire*. The hon. gentleman had stated, that the Habeas Corpus act only permitted persons to be sent to any other country, in cases where they had committed a capital crime in that country. The hon. gentleman seemed to lay considerable stress upon the word "com-

mitted," as if it was necessary that the magistrate who sent a person out of this country to Ireland, or to any other place, was bound to know that the person he so sent was legally guilty. This certainly was a misapprehension of an act, the object of which was, to secure the fair administration of justice. The hon. gentleman must know, that a man might be taken up for an offence of which he might afterwards appear not to be guilty, because it was not in the power of the person who issued a warrant for the apprehension of any individual, to ascertain whether he would be ultimately convicted or not. It was on this construction that this part of the statute had always been acted upon. It had never been understood, that if a secretary of state had sent a person to Ireland upon a charge of a capital offence, and that upon a trial he was acquitted, that that constituted a ground of charge against that secretary. If this was once laid down as law, the consequence would be, that the magistrate in this country must take upon himself the office of judge and jury, and his sending a person out of the country would absolutely be a conviction by anticipation. If a secretary of state had that species of evidence laid before him, which would warrant him in saying, a person stands charged with such an offence, that was quite sufficient. It appeared in the present case that one of the greatest magistrates in this country had sent Messrs. O'Connor over to Ireland. The warrants under which they were sent might have been questioned at the time, if those gentlemen had been advised by their counsel to question their legality. He had a right, in the first instance, to take it for granted, that the conduct of the magistrate was legal, and it remained with the gentlemen on the other side to prove the contrary. But allowing, for the sake of argument, that the conduct of the secretary of state was illegal, even then, he should contend that the motion of the hon. gentleman was neither consistent with the administration of public justice, nor with the interests of the persons in whose behalf it was stated to be made. The hon. gentleman had spoken of the probability of Mr. Arthur O'Connor being tried again in Ireland; but this was a point upon which the hon. gentleman could not speak with any degree of precision, because they did not yet know what was the nature of the offence with which he was

charged. But if it appeared that he was sent to Ireland under a proper warrant, and charged with an offence which justified the issuing of such a warrant, then he apprehended that no doubt could be entertained of the legality of the measure. Was there any thing more familiar in the administration of justice in this country, than for a person to be tried in one county, and then sent to be tried for another offence in another county? He recollected the case of a man who was charged with an offence for which he might have been tried in every county between London and Bath. The offence with which he was charged was robbing a mail; he was a passenger in the mail coach, and it was uncertain in what county he had committed the robbery—in point of fact, he believed he was tried in two or three counties. In cases of indictment for high treason, it was necessary to prove the overt act of treason in the county in which it was stated in the indictment to have been committed. Suppose a man was charged with compassing and imagining the king's death in the county of York: on the trial of that cause, the evidence on the part of the crown might fail in proving the overt act in the county of York, but they might prove that it was committed in the adjacent county. In such a case, the court would feel no difficulty: the judge, of course, would say to the jury, You must acquit the prisoner of this indictment, because the offence was not proved to have been committed in this county; but the prisoner will be sent to take his trial in the county to which the evidence will apply. This was the case in the present instance. The gentlemen in question had been sent over to Ireland to take their trial in the country where they were charged with having committed the offence. The hon. gentleman had, in the course of his speech, entered much at large into the merits of Mr. R. O'Connor. The hon. gentleman could not be aware of the consequence of this mode of proceeding. What would the hon. gentleman say, if he (the attorney general) were to enter into an argument to prove, that these panegyrics were wholly unfounded? That hon. gentleman must recollect, that when he called for the production of letters on one side, justice required that those on the other side ought also to be produced. It made no difference whether the warrant was legal or not, still, if the inquiry was ordered, it

would be necessary to publish not only the charge against those persons, but all the particulars of it, and the evidence by which it was to be supported. He would appeal to any candid man, whether such a disclosure could be made consistently with the interests of the persons who were to be tried; because, while they were nominally trying the secretary of state, they would in fact be trying the Messrs. O'Connor when they would have no means of defending themselves. Upon these grounds he felt himself bound to oppose the motion.

Mr. Tierney was very ready to applaud the liberal manner in which the learned gentleman seemed disposed to treat persons under the delicate circumstances in which the gentlemen, who were the objects of the present motion, were now placed. The learned gentleman had very forcibly stated how materially it might injure such persons, prematurely to disclose the evidence that might be brought forward on their trials. But though he was ready to reprobate any measure that had this tendency, yet, if he rightly understood the drift of the present motion, he felt no hesitation in giving it his support: it was merely his object to inquire how far the conduct of the secretary of state was consistent with the law of England. He was particularly desirous of seeing how far the secretary of state's conduct accorded with the 16th clause of the bill alluded to: if the offence, and that of a capital nature, was committed in Ireland, then no one could contend against the propriety of sending them thither. But he wished to see whether it was clearly made out that such offence had been committed, and that the charge had been substantiated upon oath previous to the issuing of the warrant: if such were the case, he would not impugn the legality of the noble secretary's conduct. But of this he had much reason to doubt: if, however, it was proved that a legal charge was preferred upon oath either in England or Ireland, then he had no more to say. But how did the case now stand? How could Mr. Arthur O'Connor or his brother take any legal steps to procure redress? He had made a direct application to the duke of Portland to know upon what grounds he was again arrested, but the only answer he received was a peremptory order to the messenger to carry him off to Ireland, where his grace was pleased to say, that Mr. O'Connor stood charged of high trea-

son. The satisfaction which he asked might surely be given without any detriment to public justice: it only went to ascertain whether there was information given upon oath against them. A direct answer to this question would stop his mouth, and not bar them from bringing their action hereafter against the secretary of state. Both points might be made to accord and proceed very well: the House of Commons might now evince their anxiety for the liberty of the subject, and any future action against the duke of Portland might still go on. At all times we ought to show our jealousy of the conduct of a secretary of state. His situation differed widely from that of a magistrate. He might naturally be suspected of obsequious submission to the will of the crown. The House should also attend to the different situation in which Mr. O'Connor now stood: he was not now to be tried by an English but an Irish jury; perhaps not by a jury at all, but by martial law, which pronounced not only on fact, but from mere suspicion. By an act passed in Ireland, a man may be apprehended without any charge, but only at the pleasure of the secretary of state, and confined without any reason during all the time the war may last. He by no means suspected it to be the intention of the present ministers; but the time might come when, by a juggle between the two governments, no man's life would be safe. Should ministers have any troublesome man to thwart them here, their Irish colleagues would have only to say, "transport him over to us, and you shall never again be troubled with him." If no charge of treason or suspicion of treason, has been substantiated against the O'Connors, their situation is melancholy indeed, and might perhaps be the situation of some who now heard him.

Mr. *Nicholls* conceived, that in point of law, the prisoners might either be tried in England or in Ireland; and if he was correct in that opinion, he wished to know why they were sent to Ireland?

The *Solicitor General* said, that the simple question was, whether the duke of Portland had or had not acted legally in issuing these warrants? The hon. mover had laid down a principle which he was sure, upon recollection, he would not persist in, viz. that in cases of treason, magistrates ought always to be suspected; and upon this principle he had presumed that the duke of Portland had not acted

legally. Now, both from the principle and the facts, he drew a different conclusion. Every magistrate had a right to be supposed innocent until he was proved to have acted illegally. As to the question, whether the duke of Portland could or could not legally issue these warrants, he had not heard any serious doubt stated. If, then, the question of law was admitted, the only point to be ascertained was, the fact. The hon. gentleman had asked, whether the duke had any ground to justify him in issuing these warrants? With respect to this fact, he should conceive himself bound not to give any answer, even if he were informed upon the subject. The duke had exercised the power intrusted to him, with the responsibility annexed to his situation. If he had misconducted himself, he might be called to account. It would not become him, to decide upon the conduct of a magistrate in whom such an important trust was confided, and who was amenable to the justice of his country. Besides, it would be highly improper in another point of view, to admit of the declaration of individuals; for if the duke was really guilty of the charge brought against him, the House ought not to suffer it to be passed over in so slight a manner—they ought to investigate it fully. But at present it was impossible to enter into an investigation of this subject without discussing the cases of the two gentlemen previous to their trial—the impropriety of which was obvious. *Prima facie*, they had a right to presume that the magistrate had acted legally. One very strong ground for that presumption was, that one of the persons accused was told by the judge by whom he was tried, that if he doubted the legality of the warrant by which he was apprehended, he might apply for a writ of Habeas Corpus. Neither of them had taken any such step, or evinced a disposition to question the legality of the arrest in a court of law. Would it, then, be right for the House to take this step, merely because an hon. gentleman had stated, that he entertained suspicions upon the subject, when the parties themselves had tacitly acknowledged its legality? Certainly not; and upon these grounds he should give his negative to the motion.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, it was objected to the motion, that to agree to it would be to bring on a premature discussion of the merits of the arrest of the O'Connors, to the disadvantage of those gentlemen, and

to the prejudice of public justice. He was surprised at these observations, when he considered the language with which it was coupled. The learned gentlemen contended, that if aggrieved, the O'Connors might have redress in a court of justice against the secretary of state. In discussing such an action, however, must not all the inconveniences arise which were apprehended from agitating the question now? But this was not the thing now called for. All that was asked was merely whether the warrant by the secretary of state was issued upon information on oath. The defence of the duke of Portland against an action would certainly disclose all that was now asked. The time of these gentlemen's trial in Ireland, if they were to be brought to trial at all, was now completely indefinite; so that there could be no means of obtaining redress if the discussion was postponed from a fear of the mischiefs of disclosure. As to the point that it was to be presumed that a magistrate acted legally, a very strong distinction existed between the case of a justice acting in the ordinary discharge of his duty, and a secretary of state exercising the functions of a magistrate for particular purposes. The degree of jealousy with which they should be watched was therefore very different. What, then, was the law in this case? He did not pretend to speak learnedly on the subject. He had once aspired to the profession, but he had not had perseverance nor relish for it sufficient to carry him on, and therefore he pretended to no more than every member of parliament should know of the constitution of the country. In order to authorize the secretary of state to issue a warrant for the arrest of any person for high treason, he ought to have a charge on oath of some act of treason, or a charge on the oath of a credible person, stating some strong circumstances of suspicion. The whole question, then, was merely a question of fact—whether the secretary of state had such good grounds for his warrant? It was said that it was to be presumed that the secretary of state had such grounds. For his part, he thought the whole of the case of the O'Connors, *prima facie* contradicted such a presumption. What was the case of Mr. Roger O'Connor? He was arrested upon three different indictments, comprehending every species of high treason, and he was acquitted upon the whole. He then came to England, wrote to the duke

of Portland on his arrival, and the first answer he receives is a warrant for his arrest. He was taken up for examination, but he was not examined. Instead of having an opportunity of applying for his Habeas Corpus, he was deprived of the means of consulting with his counsel. In this manner he was sent off to Ireland, and on the face of it, so far from a presumption of fairness, the proceeding had every appearance of being illegal. This, however, was not all: Mr. Secretary Cooke told him that in Ireland there was no charge against him, and at this very moment a new warrant arrives from the secretary of state here to bring him back to England; on his return to this country he again applied to the secretary of state to be allowed to see his counsel, and was refused. Afterwards he was advised by Mr. Erskine to make affidavit of his case; but his solicitor was denied admittance to see him. Thus Mr. Roger O'Connor was deprived of the means of applying for redress, had he been disposed to avail himself of that mode which the learned gentleman had said was in his power.

Mr. Windham said, that the question was general in its terms, and at least would lead to general inquiry; therefore if the House agreed to the motion, it must go into a general inquiry; but, before he consented to this, he must be convinced that an inquiry was necessary. His learned friend had, in the first place, insisted on the circumstance of the parties not having instituted any inquiry; and, secondly, had put the question—would not such inquiry rather do injury to the parties than be of service to them? These points, he thought, had not been met with fairness; and he must concur in the opinion of his learned friend. A distinction had been urged between magistrates—justices of the peace, for instance, and the secretary of state. He was not certain that in all instances secretaries of state were right: situations might occur when it would be more dangerous to grant an unlimited power to them than to justices of the peace. But a memorable remark had then occurred to him—that only a felon could escape from the magistrate, in case of deficiency of powers, whereas a traitor might escape the secretary of state, and having eluded the search of the executive government, he might succeed to a certain extent in some dangerous plot for the overthrow of the government. So that if, on one

hand, it was necessary for the full discharge of his municipal functions, that the justice of the peace should be possessed of power; on the other, there was an equal necessity that the secretary of state should, along with a given degree of power, enjoy a certain portion of confidence. Upon what had been said of the innocence of Mr. R. O'Connor, he should only remark, that it was possible for a man to be acquitted thrice without being thrice innocent.

Mr. *Jekyll* contended, that the hon. mover had substantiated a case of magnitude which called for parliamentary investigation. It had been said, that *prima facie*, the proceedings of the secretary of state, like that of an ordinary magistrate, was presumeably correct and legal. But a case, might be made out to repel that favourable presumption, and put the magistrate on explanation and defence. Such a case was now before the House. What was asked in satisfaction of such a charge? It was required to know, whether a charge had been made on oath to sanctify the warrant, and whether such affidavit or deposition was in existence, and producible? The solicitor-general had declared he considered it to be his duty to be silent even if such a paper existed. Was it his duty to refuse a justification of the secretary of state, if he were possessed of the only means of such justification, when called upon by the case made out by his hon. friend? What indelicacy was there in submitting to the consideration of parliament a subject that applied so seriously to the liberty of British subjects? It had been urged, that the House of Commons was not the fit scene for such an investigation—he thought it peculiarly the tribunal for such a charge to be exhibited in. To the Speaker he appealed, whether parliament, in the very essence and constitution of its inquisitional powers, did not at the commencement of every session, form a committee of justice? That committee any member might move to revive. Though he was as ready as any member to repose in an executive government that confidence which guided itself within the boundaries of the law and the constitution, he never would acquiesce in a measure like the present, which seemed to militate against every principle of justice, and which sought to establish a power of arresting without the previous and necessary basis of a charge substantiated on oath.

Mr. *Burton* thought there was but one question, namely, whether gentlemen were sitting in a house of legislature, or in a court of justice? The hon. gentleman had moved for certain warrants, and meant to ask the opinion of the House as to their legality. But this question ought first to go to a court of law; and this not having been done was, he thought, a gross insult to the courts, and an infringement of the constitution. If the gentlemen alluded to were improperly apprehended, there were many remedies within their reach. Four he should mention—first, by moving for a Habeas Corpus, secondly, by an action for false imprisonment; and he was sure, could such an action be maintained, the jury would give exemplary damages. The remaining two modes of remedy were by information or indictment. It had been said, that the gentlemen were not permitted to see their counsel or solicitor; but, in the presence of the counsel on the trial at Maidstone, had not the judge said they might move for a Habeas Corpus? Whenever a case should be made out fit to go to a committee of justice, he should consent to that proceeding; but, until then, he could not agree to the motion, but must consider it as tending to turn into ridicule the serious proceedings of that House.

Sir *Francis Burdett* said, that the remedies referred to by a learned gentleman could not have been attained, at least in the case of Mr. Roger O'Connor. What the judge said in court at Maidstone did not apply to that gentleman, who had no counsel there. Another curious argument had been brought forward, respecting the possibility of Mr. Roger O'Connor having committed acts of treason in Ireland, on account of which he might be sent back to that country. Yet these treasons were such that the government of Ireland had entirely forgotten them. Mr. Secretary Cooke had declared that there was no charge against him. This he could state with confidence to the House, for he had it under Mr. O'Connor's own hand. The case, as made out to the House, had at least the appearance of violence and severity on the part of government. Both of these gentlemen had already suffered very long imprisonments. The question had been reduced to a very narrow compass; namely, whether any information had been given which could warrant the proceeding that had taken place? He could not see what ob-

jection ministers could have to lay the warrants on the table. Their not doing so, was to him a proof that they were conscious of having acted improperly.

The House divided :

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. St. John	- - -	}	15
		Mr. Sheridan	- - -		
NOES	{	Mr. Attorney General		}	104
		Mr. Secretary at War			

So it passed in the negative.

Protest against the Land Tax Redemption Bill.] The following Protest was entered on the Journals against this bill :

" Dissentient,

1. " Because unwilling to depart from the established principle of the land-tax being voted annually; a principle, we conceive, founded on the most solid basis of political wisdom.

2. " Because the introduction of so serious an innovation, as rendering the land-tax perpetual, appears to us neither beneficial to the public, nor just to individuals. That tax being from its very nature unequal, and liable to fluctuation from a variety of causes, cannot furnish any reasonable ground on which to establish one permanent, uniform plan of financial operation.

3. " Because the proposed plan of sale or redemption, with a view to the general prosperity of the country, appears totally fallacious, as the mode in which its operation is to take effect cannot but be precarious; and should the event proposed answer the warmest expectations of the most zealous advocates for the measure, its success can alone be derived from sacrificing the great and constitutional interests of the country, namely, the landed, to the more precarious and fluctuating interest of the monied property of the kingdom.

4. " Because, admitting under the present circumstances the necessity of great and extraordinary exertions in order to protect our liberties, constitution, and country, against those unprecedented dangers with which we are menaced, we still think the country equal to resist successfully every probable degree of difficulty and danger, provided its resources are applied with wisdom as well as energy. The land undoubtedly must, in common with every other species of property, bear its part of the public burthens; and be the weight of those burthens more or less,

according to the pressure of particular times and circumstances, we never can approve the endangering the constitutional importance of that interest which has hitherto been regarded as so materially connected with the legal independence and rational freedom of our country.

" It is upon these grounds we object to this bill passing into a law; and actuated by no other motives than the conscientious discharge of our duty, and the most earnest wishes for the prosperity of the state, we have thought it necessary to record our dissent, in order that whatever inconvenience, vexation, or more serious calamity may arise from such a measure being adopted, we may not appear responsible for its consequences, either to the present age, or to posterity.

(Signed) " LEEDS,

" NEWARK,

" CAERNARVON,

" SUFFOLK & BERKSHIRE."

Debate in the Commons on the Newspapers Regulation Bill.] June 13. On the order of the day for the third reading of this bill,

Mr. *Jekyll* said, he must oppose it, from a motive of constitutional jealousy of every thing that appeared to be an attack on the liberty of the press. The censorial power of our press, was the great guardian of British liberty. This bill would make men of property and responsibility retire from newspapers altogether; and they would then fall into the hands of men of desperate fortune and low character. The consequence would be, an increase instead of a diminution of the licentiousness of the press. Handbills on brown paper would be substituted, every day, instead of a useful well-regulated paper. This bill would render innocent persons liable to prosecution, merely because they were proprietors, although they had no share in the management of the publication.

The *Attorney General* said, that his object was not to infringe on the liberty of the press but to restore it. The liberty of the press was, that every man might publish what he pleased, but he should be responsible to the public for what he published. The bill only secured to the public what it had a right to demand; the appearance of a responsible party in a court of justice, so as to be amenable to law. So far from flinging the newspapers into the hands of the dregs of the

people, it would take it out of such hands, and exclude all persons who were not liable to those whom they calumniated from being able to shelter themselves in obscurity.

Sir *Francis Burdett* said:—The liberty of the press is of so delicate a nature, and so important for the preservation of that small portion of liberty which still remains to the country, that I cannot allow the bill to pass, without giving it my opposition, and stating the objections which principally occur to my mind upon the subject. I am so decidedly hostile to the general principle of this bill, or of any bill infringing, in the slightest degree, upon the liberty of the press—a blessing I am the more jealous of, as it is so peculiarly our own—and I am at the same time so convinced that the press at present labours under greater restraint than is necessary for the suppressing of licentiousness, or even than is consistent with perfect freedom, that I shall not take up the time of the House by entering into a detail of the bill, but content myself with generally stating my reasons for objecting to it altogether. I am the more alarmed at this bill, because it admits of, and has met with, much specious argument in its support—such was all that train of reasoning concerning the necessity of securing individuals against the shafts of private calumny; whilst the real object lay concealed—the suppressing of those free animadversions upon public men and public conduct, which is the only check we now have upon our rulers, and which controls, in some degree, the actions of the most depraved of mankind. “*Audivit, Tiberius, proba queis lacerabiter, atque percussus est;*” and which is the only prop we have left to sustain the tottering fabric of the rights of the people. Sir, this measure comes from the king’s attorney-general—a quarter from whence any measure which proceeds, more especially one touching the liberty of the press, should by Englishmen be beheld with an eye of jealous suspicion—a rock, says lord Bacon, speaking of that situation (and he, I take it, was no ill judge of these matters), upon which every virtue of humanity has so frequently split. It is, therefore, the offspring of a very doubtful parent, ushered into the world under most unfavourable auspices, and introduced at a time rendering it particularly an object of well founded suspicion; for, if ever there was a time in which it might reasonably be supposed

government would be desirous of keeping its conduct from public investigation, the present moment is that very time. I do, therefore, regard this bill, on every account of its general principle, on account of the source from whence it springs, on account of the circumstances under which it is brought forward, as demanding our most vigilant, earnest, and anxious attention.—Sir, the law is already armed with power more than sufficient for punishing the errors and restraining the excesses of the press; but a government aiming at tyranny will never think the press enough under control, until it is able to commit every outrage without the fear of reproach. To commit injustice without hearing of it, is the grand desideratum and key-stone of tyranny; and thus every government aiming at that object never fails to complain bitterly of the licentiousness of the press, and of the difficulty of coming at those persons, the proprietors of public prints, who, if not venal, are marked out as its victims.—Sir, a good government, a free government, has nothing to apprehend, and every thing to hope, from the liberty of the press: it reflects a lustre upon all its actions, and fosters every virtue. But despotism courts shade and obscurity: it dreads the scrutinizing eye of liberty: the freedom of the press, which pries into its secret recesses, discovering it in its lurking-holes, and drags it forth to public detestation. Sir, if a tyrannically disposed prince, supported by an unprincipled profligate minister, backed by a notoriously corrupt parliament, was to cast about for means to secure such a triple tyranny, I know of no means he could devise so effectual for that purpose as the bill now upon your table.—Sir, that great man with whom the minister seems to be condemned to form a striking and everlasting contrast—his father—when pressed by the sycophants of power of his time, to allow a measure of this nature to be brought into parliament under his administration—when urged to it on the score of suppressing the calumnies which, he was told, issued from the press against his own reputation, “No!” said he, with a dignity of soul that characterised the man; “the press, like the air, is a chartered libertine.” But, Sir, it seems the puny chastity of the son’s character will not admit of any libertine excess. His notions of public good are different from those of his great progenitor. Sir, the present ministers are in the habit of

scaring us into a support of their measures, by holding out to us the dread of revolution, whilst themselves are the greatest revolutionists, the only enemy from whom we have anything to apprehend, from whom we have suffered much, and have still more to dread. Sir, they have nearly completed a great revolution, not in favour of, but against liberty. Need I remind you of the unconstitutional measures they are daily introducing into this House? Need I mention the wicked practices which prevail, which have arisen, and been matured, under this administration—contrary to the old laws, customs and usages of this once free and happy country? Sir, there is one enormity which has so frequently excited my disgust and indignation, that I cannot forbear mentioning it upon this, and indeed, I shall be careful to mention it upon every occasion. It is the infamous practice by which the whole law of imprisonment is altered, of sending men to those bastiles which disgrace the face of the country—those private prisons, where, under the pretence of regulations, punishments are inflicted upon men as illegal as they are cruel and unjust. And what are these regulations, as they are called? To keep men in dismal heart-sickening solitude—to feed them upon bread and water, and that scantily—to doom them to hard labour, an indefinite term, exacted by stripes, at the will, perhaps at the brutal caprice, of a merciless jailor! If this is not tyranny, I should be glad to see any man stand up in this House, and define what tyranny is. Why, it is natural for such a government to complain of the licentiousness of the press. Sir, this is part of that revolution which has been brought about, and which the present bill goes to secure—the seeds of which were sown as early as the accession of the present king to the throne—the effects of which the great lord Chatham wisely foresaw, and boldly forewarned his country. But, Sir, unhappily, ministerial artifice and corruption blinded the nation then as it does now; and there is too much reason to fear it will end as that great statesman foretold in the subversion of our old free constitution, and in the establishment of a German government. When I say “a German government,” I hope it will not be looked upon as a mere term of invective; for I firmly believe there is a plan for governing this country, not according to its old liberal maxims as established at the Revolution, but according

to a new system, or rather a renovated system repugnant to every principle of liberty and of justice. Sir, the minister proceeds warily, and with caution, in the execution of his plan. He never attempts to add another link to the chain, until the preceding one is riveted firmly upon us. It behoves us to use no less circumspection to counteract his design. Above all it behoves us to keep the press free—to watch it with all the anxiety which a lover bestows upon his mistress—to be fearful lest the breath of Heaven should visit her face too rudely—to be a little blind to her faults, and exceedingly kind to her virtues—but at all events, not to suffer the slightest attack upon her person.—Sir, this bill appears to me the more dangerous, because it does not, at first sight, and upon a superficial view of it, present those traits of harshness and severity which create disgust and alarm. A direct, open, violent attack upon the liberty of the press, even in the actual servile condition of the public mind, might possibly rouse some degree of energy and spirit to oppose it; but this measure saps and undermines; and, from not wearing the garb of violence, like the silent lapse of time, is so much the more certain in its effect. But I do hope and trust my countrymen still retain enough of that old plain English common sense, not to receive as food that which will inevitably be converted into poison. Seeing in this measure the most extensive mischief, and no adequate good possible to result from it—relying upon the good sense, spirit, and well-founded jealousy of our forefathers upon this subject, expressed in all their actions, and in the words of many of the wisest and greatest amongst them, I shall be content to guide my conduct upon this occasion by their judgment, and consequently shall give my vote against a bill touching the liberty of the press, and deriving its origin from the attorney-general to the crown.

Mr. *Ryder* said, it was not, in his opinion, possible for any man who looked at this bill coolly, to think it had any tendency against the liberty of the press. Was there any thing in the bill that had the smallest tendency to make that criminal which was not by the law of the land criminal already? Did it, in any respect, vary the conduct which a court and a jury were to pursue? Did it vary the manner in which libels were to be tried? As to the tyranny of administration against the

liberty of the press, if ever there was an administration that deserved a contrary description, the present was that administration. Was it forgotten how they supported the bill of an hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox), for enlarging the power of juries? The proprietors of newspapers were always answerable by law; and this was only to compel them to come forward, and abide the event of a fair trial in a court of justice. This was not only the law of England, but was also the law of all countries, under all governments, ever since the press was invented.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, he felt shocked at the language used by the hon. baronet, and the more so as, from the liberal principles usually maintained by that hon. baronet, he was likely to express the sentiments of a large class of the community. After the extreme solicitude which the hon. baronet had betrayed concerning the bill, he was surprised at his irregular attendance when the bill was discussed in its other stages, where the hon. baronet might have more properly offered his objections. These objections, therefore, and the glowing language with which they were enforced, must be intended to have their influence and operation elsewhere. It was with anguish of mind he was compelled to make these observations.

The Bill was read a third time.

Mr. Sheridan's Motion for a Committee on the State of Ireland.] June 14. Mr. *Baker*, with the view of excluding strangers from the gallery of the House during the debate which was about to take place on the state of Ireland, moved that the standing order of the House be read: which being done, strangers were ordered to withdraw.

Mr. *Abbot* perfectly agreed with the hon. gentleman in the propriety of carrying into execution the standing order, when a subject of so very delicate a nature was about to be discussed. But he trusted that the order would be thoroughly carried into effect; and that if any person should presume to publish an account of what passed, he would be proceeded against for a gross breach of the privileges of the House.

The gallery was then cleared. After which, Mr. *Sheridan*, in a most eloquent speech, featured to the House the lamentable state of the sister kingdom, and concluded with moving, "That a committee be appointed to take into consideration the state of Ireland." This motion was

warmly supported by lord George Cavendish, Mr. W. Smith, generals Tarleton and Fitzpatrick, Mr. Martin, sir W. Milner, Dr. Laurence, Mr. Nicholls, and Mr. Tierney: and opposed by Mr. Secretary Dundas, lord Hawkesbury, Mr. Canning, and Mr. Windham.

After which the House divided:

Tellers,

YEAS	{	Mr. Tierney - - - -	}	43
		General Fitzpatrick - -		
NOES	{	Mr. Secretary at War - -	}	159
		Mr. Canning - - - -		

So it passed in the negative.

List of the Minority.

Barclay, G.	Nicholls, J.
Burdett, sir F.	Pulteney, sir W.
Bouverie, hon. E.	Porter, G.
Biddulph, R.	Pierse, H.
Barham, J. F.	Rawdon, hon. G.
Baring, sir F.	Russell, lord J.
Combe, H. C.	Russell, lord W.
Cavendish, lord G.	Richardson, J.
Colquhoun, W.	St. John hon. St. A.
Coke, T. W.	Shum, G.
Denison, W. J.	Sheridan, R. B.
Damer, hon. Lionel	Smith, W.
Folkes, sir M. B.	Sturt, C.
Hussey, W.	Spencer, lord R.
Hare, J.	Tarleton, general
Hawkins, sir C.	Tufts, hon. J.
Jervoise, J. C.	Taylor, M. A.
Jefferys, N.	Western, C. C.
Jekyll, J.	Walpole, hon. G.
Knight, R. P.	TELLERS.
Laurence, Dr.	Fitzpatrick, general
Milner, sir W.	Tierney G.
Martin, J.	

Mr. *Sheridan* then moved, "That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to submit our opinion to his majesty, that the deplorable state of Ireland calls for an immediate and total change of counsels and measures in that kingdom:—That, if the system of coercion, enforced in the manner it has been, should succeed to the full extent of the most sanguine expectations of those who have advised it, the conquest of a desert is all that can be obtained by it; and that Ireland, so reduced and so desolated, cannot way be preserved but by a continued waste of the wealth and strength of Great Britain, for which no other return from that country can be rationally expected, but implacable hatred waiting for revenge:—That, if these measures fail, the possibility of which no wise government would leave out of its calculation, Ireland will not merely be lost, but may become an acces-

sion to the power of France, and England be exposed to the issue of a contest, on English ground, not for acquisition or dominion, but probably for existence:—We should fail in the duty we have undertaken, if we did not, at the same time, express to your majesty our absolute conviction, that no change of system in Ireland would be effectual to its purpose, without a removal of those persons, whose counsels have produced the present calamities, and who cannot in reason be considered as capable of correcting their own errors, or of attempting it with sincerity; and whose past conduct, both in practice and profession, renders it impossible for them, even were they to act on a sincere conviction of past error, to raise an expectation in Ireland of such a government on temperate principles as might dispose the people to submit to the regular and indispensable restraints of justice administered according to law, or even to accept of concessions without distrust, or of benefits with gratitude: nothing, in our opinion, but a total change of men, as well as measures, can prevent the otherwise certain alienation, and, more than possible, separation, of that country from Great Britain.”

The motion was negatived without a division.

The Duke of Leinster's Motion on the State of Ireland.] June 15. Lord Sydney moved, that the House should be cleared of strangers. He observed, that as none but members would be present at the expected discussion, if any paper presumed to publish any pretended account of their proceedings, he hoped their lordships would punish it with the utmost rigour. All strangers were then excluded, members of the House of Commons not excepted. The Duke of Leinster then moved, after a speech, in which, in alluding to the late occurrences in Ireland, his feelings were greatly affected,

“That an humble Address to his majesty, be presented, to assure his majesty, that this House will at all times be ready to maintain, by all just means in their power, the honour, independence, and unity of the British empire; that considering his majesty's kingdom of Ireland as an integral part of that empire, and the connexion of that kingdom with Great Britain as essential to the general safety and local prosperity of both, we are most unfeignedly afflicted at beholding the disor-

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ders now existing in several parts, and the discontents universally prevailing throughout the whole of the sister kingdom; that we feel that affliction increased, in a very great degree, when we reflect that though every member of this House, in his individual capacity, is but too well acquainted with the alarming condition of that country, yet his majesty's ministers have not thought proper to advise his majesty hitherto to make any communication on the subject to this House, the great hereditary council of the crown: That, in this state of extraordinary and unprecedented ignorance, this House finds it necessary to resort to its indisputable right of approaching his majesty's throne, with an humble but earnest prayer, that his majesty will deign to direct the proper officer to lay before the House a full and ample statement of the facts and circumstances which have led to this disastrous state of affairs, and of the measures which have hitherto been pursued for the purpose of averting such momentous evils: That this House, as soon as it shall have obtained such necessary information, will, without delay, as it is in duty bound, as well as by inclination willing, employ every exertion of assiduity, and all resources of its best wisdom, towards the discovery of the true causes of these disorders, their nature and extent, by a diligent examination into, and a prudent and deliberate consideration of, the measures adopted by the government, as well as of the situation of the country to which such measures were applied, so far as this House may proceed consistently with the acknowledged relation between the two kingdoms: That however great and alarming the disorders and discontents now prevailing in our sister kingdom notoriously are, however imminent the dangers which at this awful period threaten its future happiness, we will not despair, but that the result of such inquiry and discussion will enable us to assist his majesty, according to our constitutional duty, with some well-adapted remedy of such efficacious but healing counsel as may tend to restore in that distracted part of the British empire, confidence in the justice of the laws, by a due and impartial administration of them; obedience to the authority of his majesty's government, by a temperate use of its powers; satisfaction, happiness, and union amongst all the descriptions of subjects in that kingdom—in which benevolent attempts we are well

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assured that this House will only second the paternal wishes of our gracious sovereign."

A long and animated debate followed, in which the motion was supported by the dukes of Norfolk, Devonshire, Bedford, and Leeds, earls Fitzwilliam, Bessborough, Moira, Suffolk, and lord Holland; and opposed by marquis Townshend, earls Spencer, and Carlisle, the Lord Chancellor, and lord Grenville.

At the end of the debate the following amendment was moved by the duke of Norfolk, which, after some debate, was incorporated with the main question: "And we farther feel it our duty to state to his majesty, that understanding the system of coercion has been enforced with a rigour that, if related in detail, would too severely wound his paternal feelings; that concessions have been extorted by torture and scourges, a practice held in abhorrence in every other state of Europe; to implore his majesty that he will be graciously pleased, as the most probable means to put a stop to the calamities that pervade a part of that unhappy country, to direct an immediate change of system, as far as depends on the executive government, and to remove from their stations those persons under whose authority these atrocities have been perpetrated, and towards whom the afflicted people of Ireland can feel no sentiments but those of hatred and revenge." After which the House divided: Contents, 18; Proxies, 1 — 19. Not-contents, 51; Proxies, 19—70.

List of the Minority.

DUKES.	Moira
Leinster	Dorchester
Norfolk	VISCOUNTS.
Bedford	Maynard
Devonshire	LORDS.
Leeds	Walpole
EARLS.	Conyers
Fitzwilliam	Yarborough
Scarborough	Holland
Suffolk	Lovell and Hol-
Bessborough	land
Shaftesbury	

Protest against the Rejection of the Duke of Leinster's Motion for a Committee on the State of Ireland.] The following Protest was entered on the Journals:

"Dissentient,

1. "Because it was the duty of the King's ministers to have advised his majesty to make an early, regular, and

constant communication of the disastrous events which have happened in Ireland, and of the deplorable state of that kingdom to both Houses of Parliament, and more especially to this House, who are the great hereditary council of the crown, and who never have been, nor can be, consulted on a question of greater importance to the safety of the British empire, than that which was the subject of this day's debate.

2. "Because ministers have studiously withheld from the knowledge of this House a fact of such transcendent magnitude and importance as the existence of a rebellion raging in Ireland, and having employed a great portion of the supplies granted, and of the army voted by parliament, for the service of Great Britain, without the advice, consent, or knowledge of parliament, for the suppression of such rebellion, are guilty of a high aggravation of those unwarrantable acts, and criminal omissions, by refusing to yield to a motion so temperate, so prudent, and so necessary, as that which has been submitted to this House; whereby this House, is in effect, deprived of all means of performing their duty to the king and to the country, or of acting at all in their constitutional capacity as council to the crown, in a case of the most urgent necessity and imminent danger to his majesty's person and government, and to the safety of the whole empire.

3. "That, considering the nature and all the circumstances of the case, we hold that a refusal, on the part of ministers, to consent to an inquiry into these transactions, is equivalent to an acknowledgment of consciousness in them that the calamities of Ireland originate in their own pernicious councils, and will not bear investigation; and that such refusal may be attended with the most fatal consequences—to all which we hold them to be responsible to his majesty, to parliament, and to the nation."

(Signed) BEDFORD,
DEVONSHIRE, (dissentient for
the first reason),
DORCHESTER,
RAWDON,
WENTWORTH FITZWILLIAM,
HOLLAND,
PONSONBY,
LEINSTER,
SUFFOLK AND BERKSHIRE,
SHAFTESBURY,
NORFOLK, E. M.
SCARBROUGH.

King's Message respecting the Offers of Militia Regiments to go to Ireland.] June 18. Mr. Secretary Dundas presented the following Message from his Majesty :

"GEORGE R.

"His Majesty thinks proper to acquaint the House of Commons, that the officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates, of different regiments of the militia of this kingdom, have made to his majesty a voluntary tender of their services, to be employed in aid of the regular and militia forces in Ireland, for the suppression of the Rebellion now unhappily existing in that country.

"His majesty has received with the utmost sensibility this striking and seasonable proof of ardent zeal and attachment towards his person and government, and of affectionate concern for the interests and safety of his majesty's faithful and loyal subjects in Ireland; and, conceiving that his being enabled to avail himself of this new and distinguished instance of public spirit, may eventually be of the utmost importance for the protection of the lives and properties of his Irish subjects, for the speedy and effectual suppression of the rebellion, for the defence of Great Britain itself, and for the general interests and security of the empire, he recommends it to his faithful commons to consider of such provisions as may be necessary for empowering his majesty, for a time and to an extent to be limited, to accept the services of such parts of his militia forces in this kingdom as may voluntarily offer themselves to be employed in Ireland at this important conjuncture. G. R."

Debate in the Commons on the King's Message respecting the Offers of Militia Regiments to go to Ireland.] June 19. The order of the day being read for taking his Majesty's Message into consideration, Mr. Secretary Dundas moved, "That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House for his most gracious message: To assure his majesty, that, while we deeply regret that the machinations of wicked men should have induced any of his majesty's subjects to commit acts of rebellion against his majesty's government, we at the same time feel the highest satisfaction that this occasion has afforded a fresh proof of the zeal and ardour for the service of their country which has ever distinguished the militia forces of this kingdom: That, conceiving it may be of

the utmost importance, for the protection of his majesty's loyal subjects in Ireland, for the speedy and effectual suppression of the present rebellion, and for the general defence of the British empire, that his majesty should avail himself of the voluntary offers of service which have been made by several regiments of Militia, we will immediately enter into the consideration of such provisions as may be necessary for enabling his majesty, for a time, and to an extent, to be limited, to accept of the services of such Militia regiments as may wish to be employed at this important conjuncture."

Mr. Nicholls said:—I think it my duty to oppose this address. If it should be adopted, the principle upon which the militia force of this country was raised will be totally abandoned. In raising the militia, the parliament had in view the formation of a force which might be a check upon any minister who should attempt to employ a standing army against the liberties of the people. This might be an old-fashioned jealousy, but it is a constitutional one. The obvious tendency of the measure proposed is, to reduce the militia exactly to the situation of a standing army. No gentlemen will in future accept commissions in the militia but such as are devoted to a military life. The situation of the private men, too, will be totally changed; for instead of returning to their homes at the end of three years, they may be sent upon service out of the country. In short, after this measure shall have been carried into effect, it appears to me that there will no longer be any difference between the standing army and the militia. Another objection to this measure is, that it is not safe for the country to adopt it. A few weeks ago we were told, that it was necessary for us to be an armed nation, and to make every effort, in order to be prepared to repel an attack from the enemy. I understand that a great portion of the regular forces have already been sent to Ireland; and if the militia be taken away also, we shall have only new corps for our protection. The measure is also not just. The militia are enlisted under an engagement that they are not to be sent out of the country. Now, who is to decide in the present case? The men, or the officers? Does the consent of the officers compel the privates to go with them? In whatever way you take it, the transaction is a violation of justice. If the majority bind

the minority, it is not less unjust: for a particular contract has been entered into, by which it is agreed that no individual shall be required to go out of the country. But, it will, perhaps, be said, that all the men consent: still, in that case, I say the measure is unjust, because it is impossible that the consent can be free: it will be influenced by a variety of motives which are in fact compulsory. It is upon this principle that courts of equity relieve men from contracts; the engagement is not held valid when it appears to have been made without due discernment. The measure is also impolitic. To call upon soldiers to consent to go to Ireland, is to make every regiment a deliberative assembly. If this be encouraged, the troops may, perhaps, carry their deliberations somewhat farther. Why may they not choose to deliberate, and elect their own officers? We ought not to come to a decision upon any subject connected with Ireland without the greatest caution. If the army now in Ireland be not able to restore tranquillity, it is not the rebellion of a few they have to contend with. The great mass of the people must be in insurrection against the executive government. How does it happen, then, that the government is so unpopular? I am afraid it will be found that the discontents of the people are occasioned by the misconduct of their rulers. In 1795, the executive government of Ireland was acceptable to the people, and the change which was then made, now appears to have been productive of the very worst of consequences. Lord Fitzwilliam was removed from the government of Ireland, without any reason whatever being assigned. If his lordship exceeded his instructions, why was he not punished? But there is every reason to induce us to think that no blame could be attached to that noble lord, since his majesty has lately honoured him by appointments to several public offices of importance and trust. Why, then, did ministers remove lord Fitzwilliam? I can see no answer to this question, but that they were determined to avoid all opportunities of conciliation with Ireland. It is very difficult to mark the precise distinction between the two countries. Ireland is not in the same situation with respect to Great Britain, that Scotland was with respect to England, after the accession of James 1st to the throne of this country. At that time, if a Scotsman sued for his property, he was considered

as an alien. It never was so with the Irish. It is therefore exceedingly difficult to point out the precise distinction which subsists between the two countries. The legislature of Ireland is distinct from that of this country, and their executive government is separated in the same manner; yet it was lately admitted that the Irish government was examinable and controllable by the British parliament. Indeed, the lord lieutenant of Ireland being appointed by letters patent from the king of Great Britain, it naturally follows that he receives instructions from the cabinet here. On the other hand, there may be cases in which a British parliament cannot interfere. In the present instance, we know nothing of the causes of the rebellion. I shall oppose the motion for the address, from a conviction that the measure proposed to be carried into effect is unconstitutional, unjust, and impolitic.

Mr. *M. A. Taylor* wished that as great a force as possible might be sent to Ireland, provided it did not infringe on the constitution; but he had always understood that the militia could not be sent out of England. Many persons might offer their services on this occasion; but if government accepted the offers of one militia regiment, it was compulsory on all the rest; for the fear of an imputation of cowardice was alone sufficient to induce them to offer their services. For his own part, if he were a militia officer, he would not go out of the kingdom. He should consider it an act of greater bravery to remain where the constitution had placed him. If troops were wanted in Ireland, were there not other forces that might be sent thither instead of the militia?

Sir *L. Palk* considered the measure as not only hostile to the constitution, but tending to lessen the respectability of the militia service; for he was sure that gentlemen of rank and property would have an objection to accept commissions in the militia, if they were liable to be sent out of the kingdom. Though, as a member of parliament, he should oppose this measure, yet if the services of his regiment should be accepted, he would certainly accompany it.

Mr. *Pierrepoint* said, that the object of the message, if carried into effect, would be a flagrant violation of the constitution. He hoped that parliament would never consent to it. He had written to his regiment, to express his disapproba-

tion of the measure, and he hoped they would not concur in it; but if their sentiments should be different from his own, in that case they should not go a day's march without him.

Mr. *Ryder* said, that the rebellion must be suppressed, no man would deny; nor would any man contend that such a force ought not to be applied for that purpose as would prevent it from making head again. Was the government of this country to see men massacred without endeavouring to prevent it? Were they to expose the troops to the fury of the rebels, in places where, on account of the smallness of their numbers, they were unable to act successfully against them? What remained for government to do but to send over those forces who made a voluntary tender of their services? and what other force was there in the kingdom so capable of performing this service as the militia? As to the constitutional objection; was it unconstitutional for his majesty to accept, in a case of the most extraordinary danger, the voluntary offers of troops that had been raised for the defence of the country? If, as had been stated, men of rank and fortune refused to embark in this service, he saw very little hopes of this country being saved.

Lord *W. Russell* said:—If ministers are determined to persevere in this unconstitutional measure, the best line of conduct they could adopt would be, to bring in a bill for abolishing the militia laws entirely. When the Militia bill was first framed, the services of each regiment were confined to the very county in which it was raised. This arose from that just jealousy which our ancestors entertained of standing armies: they were desirous that the soldier and the citizen should always be inseparably united in the same person. Why are the militia to be sent out of the country, contrary to law?—for the purpose of subjugating a neighbouring kingdom, in order to force a system upon the people which nine-tenths of them abhor. It is said, that the militia are not compelled to go to Ireland; but I contend that there will be the same kind of compulsion with regard to their offers for that service as there was in the case of the voluntary contributions, when a box was carried about, and every man was stigmatized as a traitor who refused to subscribe. The present measure perfectly resembles, as to compulsion, those contributions, with this difference, that a

man's loyalty is to be estimated by the desire he testifies to embroil his hands in his brother's blood. I too well remember the American war, ever to vote one shilling, or one man, for subjugating Ireland, until conciliatory measures shall have been tried.

Mr. *Bankes* was against the measure, but highly disapproved of the language of the noble lord; for there never was a rebellion more unprovoked than that which now existed in Ireland, inasmuch as measures more conciliatory had never been adopted in any country. Could any man say, that men with arms in their hands were not to be opposed? Feeling as he did, that, if Ireland was to succeed in the rebellion, and be leagued with France, this country could not be safe, he must approve of all the measures that had been adopted for the suppression of the rebellion. But the sending away the militia would be an infraction of the establishment of that body. He thought some middle line must be adopted. Some men might be taken out of each militia regiment, who, after being so drafted, would not then be a militia, but a part of the standing army; but he strongly objected to sending forces to Ireland as militia regiments; and concluded with moving, as an amendment, that that latter part of the address, which gave the consent of the House to the militia being sent to Ireland, be left out.

Mr. *Windham* (secretary at war) felt more surprised at the conclusion of his hon. friend who spoke last, than at that of other hon. gentlemen. Some of them had spoken out; and their explanation was to him perfectly satisfactory, as a proof of their motives to the opposition they had avowed to the measure. One hon. gentleman had obscurely developed those principles on which the sending an additional force to Ireland was opposed; and the noble lord who had spoken last but one, had proved an ample commentator on what that hon. member had only partly disclosed. In fact, the noble lord had done what, in vulgar language was called "letting the cat out of the bag;" and the House could not but see that from the language used by the noble lord, he did not wish to suppress the rebellion in Ireland. The noble lord had said, that he would not vote one shilling, or one man, to assist the government of Ireland in subjugating the people of Ireland. Was not this the expression of a wish that the

rebellion ought not to be suppressed?—[Hear, hear!] It was not his wish to misrepresent the noble lord: but if he had done so, the opportunity would presently occur of his being set right. One hon. gentleman had suggested that the House ought to pause before it agreed to the address; but would gentlemen pause while an active rebellion existed in one corner of the empire? Were hon. gentlemen to hesitate whether the House should act decisively in a crisis so important to British interests, and on the events of which the security and peace even of England itself so much depended? Was it to be endured that men should advise that the legislature should look on while the king's troops and the rebels were fighting, and not assist the former to bring the latter to a sense of duty? To the declaration that he would not vote one man nor one shilling to subjugate Ireland, the noble lord had added, that he would not consent to men being sent to embue their hands in the blood of their fellow subjects. But did the noble lord not know, that in the most legitimate war, men were equally liable to embue their hands in blood? He should ask the noble lord, would he not act against the army of Buonaparté, supposing it to effect a landing in this country? or, if he had such a term in his vocabulary as "rebellion," would the noble lord not fight and suppress a civil war? One hon. gentleman had set out with remarking, that the militia was originally raised to form a control over the standing army. It might have been so; but, in point of fact, did gentlemen not know that the king had the power of disbanding the militia? His hon. friend who spoke last had admitted that the militia might be reduced, and appeared to wish that a corps might be formed from it, consisting of such men as were really disposed to volunteer their services against the rebels. Yet the hon. gentleman appeared not to have recollected, that if this were once done, the alleged constitutional check would cease—that if the militia was originally a check, any reduction of it would diminish that check. The objection, that the militia had been originally raised merely for the protection of the country, and never to be sent out of it, did not appear to him stronger than what might be urged in the case of the fensible corps, who had been raised originally on similar terms. These corps were at that moment the chief body the government of Ireland

had to depend upon: they, too, originally made offers of voluntary service; and if the government had not accepted of them, the rebellion in Ireland must have terminated in a very little time in favour of the rebels. Certainly, no man would say that it was not just that men should do their duty, and a principle of justice that they should be permitted to defend their country. With regard to the supposition that many men would not again enter into the militia if this measure was adopted, he could only say that he thought it not probable; but even supposing it possible, he should set that against the salvation of Ireland.

Mr. *Sheridan* said:—The motion which has been submitted to the House is the most extraordinary that ever was heard within these walls. The right hon. gentleman who moved the address seems to have considered the measure proposed as one to which no objection could be framed. We cannot forget how lately the right hon. gentleman came down to this House, and stated the country to be in imminent danger, and to require the exertion of every heart and hand for its defence. It is somewhat extraordinary, then, after all the regular troops are sent out of this kingdom, that he should call upon the House to give their consent to strip the country of the militia forces on which it relies for its defence. It has been asked, what would have been thought of ministers if they had concealed the offer made by the militia? If ministers could have done what they now propose without consulting the House, I will venture to say that we should have heard nothing of this offer. The advice of parliament would have been despised, and ministers would have proceeded upon their own discretion. Although they may hold in contempt the advice of this House, they were not quite bold enough to act in violation of the law. Never was there a word of rebellion in Ireland mentioned; never was the least communication made, on which the House could offer its advice, till its consent was to be obtained to this most unconstitutional measure. The right hon. gentleman expresses a doubt, whether we are willing to give our support to extinguish rebellion in Ireland. I am aware that the right hon. gentleman is desirous to lead us into slippery ground. He shall not, however, betray me into any indiscretion. When he accuses us of being desirous to with-

hold our aid in the extinction of rebellion, I would ask him, whether he means to say, that in every case this House is bound to side with a king of Ireland, and an Irish House of Commons, against the people of Ireland? Will he, without apostatizing from every opinion he ever held, deny that cases may occur in which it would be impossible for this House to give their support on that side? Suppose the Irish parliament were to re-enact all those horrible statutes by which the people were oppressed, would this House be bound to support the Irish legislature against the people in such a quarrel? If the parliament of Ireland were to enact torture by law,—if it were to establish bastiles, arbitrary imprisonments, ignominious punishment without conviction, transportation without trial, and a series of oppressions too degrading, too tyrannical for human nature to endure, would the British House of Commons be bound to support the Irish legislature against the resentment which such proceedings might provoke? This House is not bound to sanction the injustice, and to strengthen the oppression which the legislature of the sister kingdom, however independent, might be pleased to inflict. One hon. gentleman has thought proper to assert, that the rebellion in Ireland is wholly unprovoked, and that every measure of conciliation was employed to avert it. But, when the government of Ireland was agreeable to the wishes of the people, was there any discontent? After the prospect of that conciliation was taken away—after lord Fitzwilliam was recalled—after the hopes which had been raised were blasted—when the spirit of the people was beaten down, insulted, despised, I will ask any gentlemen to point out a single act of conciliation which has emanated from the government of Ireland? On the contrary, has not that country exhibited one continual scene of the most grievous oppression, of the most vexatious proceedings; arbitrary punishments inflicted; torture declared necessary by the highest authority in the sister kingdom next to that of the legislature? And do gentlemen say that the indignant spirit which is roused by such exercise of government is unprovoked? After being betrayed, duped, insulted, fooled, disappointed in their dearest hopes, and again thrown into the hands of the rulers they detested and despised, was it impossible that they should feel emotions of indignation and

discontent? Every man recollects the subscription set on foot in London, under the auspices of Mr. Angerstein, in order to collect money for the support of industrious manufacturers in Ireland, wholly without employment, and destitute of the means of subsistence. Of this description there were from 30 to 40,000 men in Ireland. By the produce of charitable subscription, 25,000 a week were, by the scantiest benefactions, prevented from being famished. Such was the situation of so many unhappy individuals; and when charity was wearied out, unable any longer to supply their wants, it was not the poison of French principles, but the want of bread that seduced them. It was not their desire to be Frenchified, but their reluctance to be famished, that wrought upon them to make new attempts to escape from their misery. This was the true cause that made them a prey to seduction; and with one so satisfactory before our eyes, why need we seek to impute their conduct to the poison of French principles, a cause so inadequate to the effect?—The right hon. gentleman denies that the militia could be intended as a counterbalance to a standing army, because it is the prerogative of the Crown to reduce the militia at pleasure. The right hon. gentleman has proved himself completely ignorant of the constitution of the militia. The king can neither encrease nor diminish the number of the militia. Each county supplies a certain number, and can neither have more nor less than its quota. It has been said that the service is voluntary, but I contend that it is not. It is in vain to talk of a thing being voluntary where no real option is left. The case of the worthy baronet is a proof of this. He finds himself in the whimsical situation of being a volunteer without wishing it. It reminds me of the story of the people who were dragging a man along, and on being asked the reason, gave for answer, that it was a volunteer they were carrying along with them. It had been said, that the resolution of the hon. gentleman and the worthy baronet, who have expressed their determination to follow their corps wherever they go, is a proof that they are not compelled. The motive from which they act, however, is submission, not consent. They go, not for the reason given by the right hon. gentleman, but for the reason assigned by themselves—that they would not desert the brave men with whom they served. To keep Ireland against the will of the

people is a vain expectation. With 80,000 troops with arms and discipline, against an unarmed and undisciplined multitude, is it not clear that the contest lies between the government and the people? Without reversing the system, therefore, Ireland cannot be saved. The struggle is one, not of local discontent and partial disaffection, but it is a contest between the people and the government. In such a state of things, without entering into a particular inquiry, the fair presumption is, that the government is to blame. He concluded with concurring in the amendment.

Mr. *Wynn* spoke in reply to Mr. *Sheridan*.

Mr. Secretary *Dundas* said, that as to the idea that this measure was unconstitutional, upon the ground that the militia was established as a check and control upon the standing army, he knew not where gentlemen took up that idea. He had endeavoured to collect from the best sources he could meet with, the grounds upon which it was agreed to, and he was satisfied that the idea of the militia being a check and control upon the standing army, was not the ground upon which the measure was adopted. He thought, that 12,000 of the militia forces ought now to be allowed to go to Ireland, and that was the resolution he intended hereafter to propose. He would now come closer to the argument on which he conceived the whole of this measure rested; for he would say at once, that if he was informed that a large body of the French were actually on board, and sailing towards this country for the express purpose of invading it, he should even then advise his majesty to send ten or twelve thousand men to Ireland, to quell the rebellion there. All he desired gentlemen to allow was, that there now existed a rebellion in Ireland; and having done so, it would follow that some measure should be adopted to quell it. Of what nature was that rebellion? Gentlemen might disguise it for the purposes of debate, but they could not say it was not the desire and object of a great number of low and deluded people in Ireland to separate that country from this, and to make use of the arms of France to accomplish that object. Out of the room in which he was now speaking he was sure the hon. gentleman himself would not venture to tell him distinctly, that he believed there did not now exist in Ireland a great body of low

people who wished to separate it from this country, through the arms of France. With what consistency, then, could the observations and the proposition of the hon. gentleman, that Ireland should not be a post of France, stand together? And what was more essential to the interest of this country, than that Ireland should not be made either a post or a province of France? Need he refer to the geography of the two countries? He therefore said, that to send troops to Ireland to quell the rebellion there, was, in other words sending troops to prevent the French from obtaining a post there, and that was in reality defending Great Britain as well as defending Ireland; and the militia, in going to Ireland, were acting on the true spirit of their institution. Gentlemen called for documents. What documents did they want to know that there was a rebellion in Ireland? But perhaps they wanted to know whether it was a justifiable rebellion. Did they mean to wait to settle this point until Ireland should become a province to France? for that might be the effect of their opposition to this measure. They said, they would not vote for sending to Ireland either one man or one shilling, until they had information upon this matter. This would increase instead of diminishing the rage of the rebels. It was, indeed, stated, that religious restraints were the great cause of the rebellion; but it should be remembered, that among the rebels were to be found, not only Roman Catholics, but Presbyterians and persons of other modes of faith. He would not stop to settle these points now; but he thought it was pretty evident, from such men uniting in this rebellion, that they must be united by some common cement, different from any that could arise from religious sentiments. They were arranged under the general title of United Irishmen; they differed in many points, but their main object was, to separate Ireland from this country, and to reduce Ireland to be a province to France; and this they would be glad to effectuate by means of French arms. Without entering into the speculations of gentlemen about the causes of this rebellion, the only question now was, should that House do every thing in its power to crush the rebellion in Ireland? Some gentlemen had wished to know whether there were not regular forces in this country that might be sent instead of the militia. Gentlemen were not bound to believe him; but he asserted

it to be the fact, that the militia was the military force, out of which troops could at this moment be most conveniently spared. There was not now in this country a greater body of regular troops than was necessary. Without explaining more of the matter, he was sure that the best mode that could be adopted by way of sending a military force to Ireland, was, that of sending ten or twelve thousand of the militia. Gentlemen asked, would 12,000 be sufficient? He could only say, from the information of military men, he hoped it would be sufficient; for it was observable that much depended on the time in which the force was got ready, much depended on the rapidity of the measure, and indeed in that consisted its chief merit. More might be done, perhaps, in a week now, by ten or twelve thousand men than double the number could afterwards accomplish in a month. Indeed, the advantages of expedition were not to be calculated, and, therefore, unless his hon. friend who moved the amendment could find something that would be as speedy as the measure now proposed, he would fall short of his own object; for the point was to act on the sudden, and to dislodge the rebels from the places where they had erected the standard of rebellion. The simple question was, whether the House would take upon itself the responsibility of letting the rebellion go uncrushed when they had an opportunity of crushing it. Those who thought that the future inconveniences of this measure were not to be put on a footing with the inconveniences of rebellion, would not reject the opportunity, but would, by agreeing to the address, enable his majesty to avail himself of the service of a respectable body of military force to put an end to rebellion.

Mr. Tierney said, he was called upon to pronounce Ireland in such a state as to justify the sending out of the country a body of men, whom in all events it would be highly unconstitutional, but, in the present case, highly culpable, to send. If Ireland was so situated as that the presence of this body was essential to its preservation, it became necessary for him to watch the interests of England. He should not, he trusted, be suspected of a disposition to separate the interests of the two countries; but if the interests of the one clashed with that of the other, it became him to recollect that he was a representative of England; and though no

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man was better disposed towards the whole empire, and to support the dignity of the crown, he should never consider himself as justified in going the lengths proposed, in which there might be danger to England. There was not a man in the House who had less inclination to give countenance to a rebellion plotted in concert with the existing government of France. To rebellion of all sorts he had the greatest aversion; but his abhorrence was particularly great from one fomented by the French government. As a friend to liberty, he could not look without horror at the abominable conduct of the French, whose latter actions had much altered his opinion of them. He once saw them engaged in a struggle for the emancipation of millions of human beings, but they were now pursuing mad schemes of aggrandizement. If the right hon. gentleman should attempt to convince him that the measures pursued in Ireland originated in the agency of France he would have great difficulty. Not having the opportunity of referring to official documents, he could only form his opinion on such information as he was able to collect: for instance, he found that lord Fitzwilliam was of a different opinion, and that his lordship had not formed his opinion from the consequences of the measures which had been pursued. Unfurnished with any official document, he should feel himself as much disposed to give credit to the noble lord, as to the statement of the right hon. gentleman. It was certain that the people were in arms against the government; nor was it easy to conceive how, having been scourged, burnt, and massacred, they should have any other feeling than aversion to that government. What could he think of a government by which general Abercrombie was dismissed, for adding to his other excellent qualities that of humanity? He could not consent to send troops to a country where one general was dismissed for his humanity, and another called to an account for sparing 4,000 men. Was he to give his sanction to sending fresh troops, the gentlemen and militia of England, to be commanded by what he called only a desperate Irish faction? The right hon. gentleman ought to furnish him with proofs that the rising in Ireland was at the instigation of France. He certainly did not oppose the interests of the empire, as he did not believe that sending troops was calculated to prevent that evil which was only to be averted by

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gaining the affections of the people. He did not in this offer any opposition to the constitutional right of his majesty to send out of the country any of the regular troops; but when called upon to aid and abet in sending troops to Ireland, he would not give a man, nor a guinea, until the true cause of the rebellion was known; and until he knew what were the measures which it was intended to pursue, whether of coercion or conciliation. He might, indeed, stand by a patient spectator, but he would not be an accessory. The right hon. gentleman had said, that he did not consider the measure proposed as unconstitutional. The Militia act was intended not only as a body for the defence, but it formed a part of the constitution of the country, from which the greatest advantages were derived. Where was a substitute to be found for this body? He had heard a rumour that it was to be found in the Irish militia, who were to be introduced here; but this, he hoped, was untrue. It was the evident meaning of the act, that the men, if disposed, should not be permitted to leave the kingdom, as the tenor of their oath was, to serve faithfully in Great Britain. No answer had been given to the argument which had been urged, that all the regulars were not yet sent out of the country. It was obvious, that a militia, embodied for five years, was sufficient for all domestic purposes; and as there were 3,500 guards, he thought the militia were competent to do their duty. It was to be observed, too, that those who had offered to go, had no right thus to dispose of their services, since the militia was a body for the general defence of the country, and part of those raised in Devonshire belonged as well to Northumberland as to their own county.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, he could not be satisfied with giving a silent vote, partly on account of the singularity no less than the importance of the question, partly because his sentiments and feelings on it did not exactly coincide with those which any gentleman had expressed in the course of the present debate. They who had contended for the propriety of accepting, under the present circumstances of the country, the generous offer of a certain number of militia regiments to serve in Ireland, did not seem to think the measure half so objectionable in itself, as he must confess it appeared to him. Not that he could admit the weight of

some of the arguments by which the measure had been opposed by gentlemen on the other side of the House; for instance, that of the hon. gentleman who had just spoken, who had strangely and most unwarrantably contended, that the militia-men, by the engagement which they took on entering into that body, to serve any where in Great Britain, were precluded from serving out of Great Britain, even by their own consent. But yet, he felt it his duty to declare that he considered the measure as being but too likely to be productive of lasting injury to that most excellent institution the militia; and farther as being in the strictest sense unconstitutional. He would explain the sense in which he used the word unconstitutional, because he thought that several gentlemen had used it in a vague, indefinite way, without annexing to it any specific meaning. The circumstance which rendered our militia so dear to us, as a constitutional force, was its being officered by country gentlemen, men of property, of family, of domestic connexions, of personal influence, whose arms were in no conjuncture likely to be turned against their country. Now, he feared that it was the too natural tendency of the measure proposed, to discourage and prevent gentlemen of this description from entering so freely into the militia. It might therefore tend to render it necessary for parliament hereafter to relax, and by degrees even to annul the regulations which confined the commissions of officers to persons of this description; and it was obvious that the militia, if officered like the army, would cease to be the constitutional force it was at present. He could not but admit also, that there was much force in the objection, that offers of the nature of these of which he was now speaking, however voluntary in name, were often not so in substance. There were cases in which many gentlemen might not feel themselves at liberty to hold back, and refuse to join in the offer of their comrades, not only though the extension of their service might be highly inconvenient and disagreeable to them, but though it might be directly contrary to their ideas both of rectitude and of policy. This, in short, was one of the occasions on which he said, that a principle of false honour (the absolute authority of which he had so often reason to regret) would determine a man to act against his sense, both of duty and of interest. It was, however,

matter of no small satisfaction in the present instance, that there was every reason to believe that the offer to serve in Ireland had come not from the officers, who might have been supposed desirous of distinguishing themselves at the expense of their men, but from the public spirit of the privates and non-commissioned officers, and from their honest zeal in the cause of their country.—But after all this: strong as he felt these objections to be, yet what was to be done? A rebellion to a most alarming extent had broke out in Ireland, and continued to rage even with increasing violence. If it had grown into a maxim of unquestionable authority, “in war, he who gains time gains every thing;” in the case of an insurrection, the maxim was still more clear, and of infinitely more cogent application. It was plainly intimated, that we had no other force to send, and it was impossible for the necessity to be stated in stronger terms than those which had been used by the right hon. secretary, who declared, that if he knew an attack were even now about to be made on this country, he should yet judge it necessary and adviseable to send away so much of our force. But some gentleman had objected that the rebellion in Ireland had perhaps been owing to the mismanagement and oppression of our government. What then? Was it therefore not to be suppressed? He would abstain from discussing that perhaps difficult question of practical morality, Whether it were just to take part in a war when commenced unjustly, though indispensably necessary to our safety? and therefore for the present he would forbear from enforcing the position universally admitted, that Ireland’s coming into the possession of France, might be the ruin of Great Britain. But waving this, and not considering its consequences to ourselves, would it be productive to Ireland itself? The hon. gentleman argued as if it were an advantage and a privilege of which you were depriving the rebellious Irish, by preventing their joining themselves to France. But again—gentlemen argued against the present measure, because they wished that conciliatory measures should be tried rather than coercive, and that the effusion of blood should be spared. It was precisely these very considerations which urged him most powerfully to support the present measure. The force actually in Ireland might perhaps be sufficient, in the end to reduce the rebels to subjection,

but it could only be after a long and severe struggle; and if you wished to dispirit the rebels, and to induce them to desist from their efforts, you must strengthen the hands of government by powerful reinforcements, in order to convince them that all farther resistance would be fruitless. Would you feed the rebellion, send succours but just sufficient ultimately to suppress it; would you at once stifle it, let your reinforcements be large. But if this was true on the principle of our depending on the force of arms for putting an end to the rebellion, how much more was it unquestionably true on the principle of your terminating the rebellion by concession and conciliation. Except you were so unambiguously strong as to be certainly able to defeat the greatest force the rebels could bring against you, concession could not fail to be interpreted into fear, and would tend only to inspirit the efforts of the rebels, and infuse into them a contempt of your strength. It was not that he was insensible to the suffering of Ireland, or that he did not feel deeply for the melancholy situation of the people of that country. The present was not a time for discussing the causes which had rendered the Irish in general that uncivilized and barbarous people they were confessed to be. He would only hint at his opinion, that the causes of these evils would be found, on careful investigation, not to have taken their rise from any system pursued by the present government (more he verily believed had been done for Ireland of late years than perhaps for a century before), to be the fruit of old and long standing grievances, in which, according to the course of Providence, we were now suffering the bitter consequences of long past misconduct and neglect. He had often felt deeply on this subject, and could not help protesting against the kind of sensibility which he saw in some gentlemen, who seemed not to begin to feel for the wretched state of the lower Irish, until it became, for party purposes, a convenient subject of lamentation in that House. On the present occasion, however, convinced that the measure was in itself objectionable, he must give it his decided support on the ground of its indispensable necessity, and even still more on the principle of its being calculated to spare the effusion of human blood, and to give the king’s government the power of proceeding in the spirit of conciliation and

lenity. He could not but hope that his majesty's ministers would rejoice in any opportunity of acting towards a set of deluded men on these humane principles, and he was sure nothing would be so likely to give them the means of so acting, as to support the present question.

Lord *George Cavendish* was of opinion, that the rebellion in Ireland could not be crushed but by an armed force; but he blamed ministers for not seeing this sooner, and being much better prepared for it. The question with him was not whether a military force should be sent to Ireland, but what was the nature of that force. To send the militia was entirely unconstitutional; and he was afraid that this measure would destroy the institution of the militia itself.

Sir *W. Pulteney* agreed, that this was a matter of great importance, and must have a vast effect on the militia in future. He regarded it as an alarming inconvenience. It was manifest that there was some dreadful mistake in the management of the affairs of Ireland. The rebellion was not owing to Jacobins. He was afraid that sending the militia was now unavoidable, but this was no excuse for those who brought us into the embarrassment.

The question being put, "That the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question," the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{	Mr. Secretary at War	-	}	118
		Mr. Ryder	- - - -		
NOES	{	Mr. Bankes	- - - -	}	47
		Sir Lawrence Palk	- -		

So it was resolved in the affirmative. The Address was then agreed to. After which a bill passed both Houses "for empowering his majesty, for a time and to an extent to be limited, to accept the services of such parts of his militia forces in this kingdom as may voluntarily offer themselves to be employed in Ireland."

Protests against the Bill for accepting the Offers of the Militia to go to Ireland. June 21. The following Protests were entered on the Journals:

"Dissentient,

1. "Because the militia being the only permanent armed force that can be lawfully maintained, and by its institution intended solely for the defence of this kingdom, an offer to carry it out of the kingdom could not be made consistent with

the principles of the constitution, and ought not to receive the sanction of parliament.

2. "Because no communication relating to Ireland having been made to this House, or the advice of parliament taken on the state of that kingdom, it can have no means of judging of the propriety of any measures to be taken; and the only source of information being private accounts and unauthenticated publications, which assert that scourges and tortures have in numerous instances been inflicted to extort confessions and accusations, which illegal acts (being generally believed, and not having been contradicted by lords in his majesty's councils when called upon to do it) might greatly tend to excite those insurrections which the application of this force is intended to suppress.

3. "Because this bill has been passed with a haste and precipitancy incompatible with the cool deliberation requisite for a matter of such importance, and contrary to the wise regulations and orders of this House.

(Signed) NORFOLK, E. M."

"Dissentient,

1. "Because, convinced that the very existence of the militia, as a constitutional force, depends upon strictly adhering to that great and fundamental principle on which it was originally established, namely, the internal defence of the kingdom.—2. Because, any departure (under whatever circumstances) from conditions hitherto considered as sacred, and on which every engagement respecting the militia service has hitherto proceeded, must create distrust with regard to its future destination, and hereafter render it extremely difficult to find persons of property and independence disposed to serve as officers.—3. Because, however laudable the offers lately made by certain militia corps to serve in Ireland undoubtedly are, it does not appear that those offers can be accepted without manifestly risking great and serious inconvenience to this country; and, highly important as it is to crush, as soon as possible, the rebellion now unhappily raging in the sister kingdom, the proposed measure till appears highly exceptionable; nor can it be too much lamented if, from an unfortunate distribution of the forces of the empire at large, tranquillity cannot be restored to Ireland but at the expense of the constitution of Great Britain.

(Signed) LEEDS."

Motions in the Commons for a Change of System in Ireland.] June 22. Lord George Cavendish rose to make his promised Motion respecting Ireland, upon which Mr. W. Bootle moved, that the standing order relative to the exclusion of strangers be enforced.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, he knew that any member had a right to enforce this standing order; but he wished them to reflect a little on the possible effect of it—for any other member had a right to enforce any other standing order, which would so obstruct the business of the House as to render impracticable many of its present rules of proceeding. Perhaps some gentlemen were not aware of the extent of the standing order for the exclusion of strangers: for it directed, not only that no strangers should presume to stay in the gallery, but that, if there were any found there, in the lobby, or in any of the avenues leading to the House, such strangers should be immediately taken into the custody of the serjeant at arms. This would certainly be a laborious duty at the present moment, since the gallery was full of strangers.

The *Speaker* said, that undoubtedly the standing order was such as the hon. gentleman had stated it; and it was competent to any hon. member at any time to move it; and the House directing the order to be enforced, would presume nothing but that the serjeant at arms should execute the order in conformity to the commands of the House; but although the order might be executed to its full extent, yet he apprehended it was competent to the House to enforce its own orders either in whole or in part; the House would therefore determine, whether it would enforce the whole of the standing order, or be satisfied with enforcing that part of it which was usual upon this motion—which was merely to cause strangers to withdraw.

Mr. *Sheridan* said, it appeared to him an alarming thing to take such steps as these to prevent the public from being acquainted with the proceedings of the House. He really thought that the practice of making public the substance of the speeches of members of parliament was a very useful and a very laudable practice. He thought the public had a right to expect that indulgence, and he knew of no harm it could possibly produce. Much advantage had resulted from it already, and the practice had continued now for many years with little or no interruption. The practice of the House upon such oc-

casions, in enforcing only a part of the order, was clearly not only against the letter, but also against the spirit of the order; the order certainly was, that strangers being found in the gallery during the proceedings of the House, should be taken into the custody of the serjeant at arms. He therefore maintained, either that the whole of the order must be enforced; in which case every stranger must be taken into custody, or that the order must be waved altogether.

The *Speaker* said, he should proceed in this case as he had always proceeded, and as his predecessors had proceeded in similar cases, which was, to order strangers to withdraw. It was certainly competent to the House to proceed to the full extent of the order; but he apprehended it was also competent for the House to proceed in part only upon the order. However, the whole of the order must be enforced if the House should be of opinion that it ought to be done—[Here there was a cry of “No, no!” and “Withdraw, withdraw!”]

The Hon. *George Walpole* contended, that the people had a constitutional right to be informed of the proceedings of the House; but as the hon. mover remained inflexible, he should vote for the whole of the order being enforced.

The cry of “Withdraw, withdraw!” now became more loud; and in a few minutes the gallery was cleared.

Lord *George Cavendish* then rose, and, after a short and emphatic speech, moved the following Resolutions:

1. “That, whenever this House is called upon to vote supplies of men or money, to be provided by levies and taxes on our constituents, it is our right and duty to watch over and control the purposes to which they are to be applied.

2. “That this House is ready to make every exertion in its power, to enable his majesty to repress and subdue all insurrections and rebellion against his lawful authority; trusting that his majesty will temper acts of necessary severity with mercy, and never lose sight of that equitable and protecting policy which, by the redress of all real grievances, may secure to him the loyalty, confidence, and affection of his people.

3. “That it is the opinion of this House, that although at all times we shall be ready, by all just means, to maintain the unity of the British empire, and our connexion with Ireland as an integral part

of that empire; yet we never can believe that it is his majesty's wish to support or countenance the principle of permanently governing that country as a conquered and hostile country—a principle no less contrary to the fundamental maxims of universal justice, than to the mutual interests of the two kingdoms.

4. "That, in the opinion of this House, it is the duty of his majesty's ministers to advise his majesty, that he would be graciously pleased to repeat the recommendation he made through the lord lieutenant of Ireland to the legislature of that kingdom in 1793, 'seriously to consider 'the situation of the Irish Catholics, and 'to consider it with liberality, for the 'purpose of strengthening and cementing 'a general union of sentiment among all 'the classes and descriptions of his majesty's subjects in support of the established constitution.'

5. "That it is the opinion of this House, that such persons as have uniformly, and on all occasions, expressed their disapprobation of measures of concession and conciliation, and under whose administration his majesty's kingdom of Ireland has been reduced to a situation so imminently dangerous to the general interests, happiness, and power of the whole empire, cannot be effectual channels of his majesty's royal grace and beneficent intentions towards their fellow subjects."

The first resolution being put, lord John Russell seconded the motion. Mr. Canning, in a speech of more than an hour, opposed the motion, and concluded with moving the orders of the day. Mr. St. John followed Mr. Canning, and urged the necessity of adopting the system recommended by the noble mover. Mr. H. Addington opposed the resolutions. Dr. Laurence enforced the necessity of adopting them. Mr. Fox made a long and able speech, in which he gave notice of a motion, if the series of resolutions opened by his noble friends should be negatived. Mr. Dundas followed Mr. Fox. Mr. William Grant and Mr. Serjeant Adair spoke against the resolutions. Mr. Grey and Mr. Sheridan in support of them. The question being put, "That the other orders of the day be now read," the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ Mr. Grant - - - - }	212
	{ Sir C. W. R. Boughton - }	
NOES	{ Lord G. A. H. Cavendish }	66
	{ Lord John Russell - - }	

Lord G. Cavendish's motion was consequently lost.

List of the Minority.

Aubrey, sir John	Lemon, sir Wm.
Barclay, G.	Lloyd, J. M.
Baring, sir F.	Milford, lord
Beauclerk, C. G.	Milner, sir W.
Biddulph, R.	Nicholls, J.
Bird, W. W.	North, Dudley
Bouverie, hon. E.	Northey, W.
Brogden, J.	Peirse, H.
Burch, J. R.	Plumer, W.
Burdett, sir F.	Porter, Geo.
Byng, G.	Pulteney, sir W.
Coke, T. W.	Rawdon, hon. George
Coke, E.	Richardson, J.
Colquhoun, W.	Robson, R. B.
Combe, alderman	Russell, lord W.
Courtenay, J.	Sheridan, R. B.
Damer, hon. L.	Spencer, lord R.
Denison, W. J.	St. John, hon. St. A.
Fitzpatrick, general	Tarleton, general
Fletcher, sir H.	Taylor, M. A.
Fox, hon. C. J.	Taylor, W.
Greene, J.	Thompson, T.
Grey, C.	Tierney, G.
Hare, J.	Townshend, lord J.
Hawkins, sir C.	Tufton, hon. H.
Hobhouse, B.	Tufton, hon. J.
Howard, H.	Vyner, R.
Hussey, W.	Walpole, hon. G.
Jeffreys, N.	Walwyn, J.
Jekyll, J.	Western, C. C.
Jervoise, J. C.	Whitbread, S.
Jones, Thos.	TELLERS.
King, sir J. Dashwood	Cavendish, lord G.
Laurence, Dr.	Russell, lord J.
Lemon, J.	

Mr. Fox then moved the Resolution which he had announced in the course of his former speech; viz. "That this House, understanding it to be matter of public notoriety, that the system of coercion has been enforced in Ireland, with a rigour shocking to humanity, and particularly that scourges and other tortures have been employed for the purpose of extorting confession, a practice justly held in abhorrence in every civilized part of the world, is of opinion that an immediate stop should be put to practices so disgraceful to the British name."

The motion was supported by Mr. Sheridan and Mr. G. Walpole; and opposed by Mr. Douglas, and by Mr. Secretary Dundas, who moved, that the House do now adjourn. The question being put, "That the House do now adjourn," the House divided:

Tellers.

YEAS	{ The Lord Sheffield - - }	204
	{ Mr. Douglas - - - }	

NOES { Mr. St. John - - - } 62
 { Mr. George Walpole - - }

So it was resolved in the affirmative. The House accordingly adjourned at half past four in the morning.

Motions in the Lords for a Change of System in Ireland.] June 27. The standing order for the exclusion of strangers was again enforced. After which, the Earl of Bessborough moved,

“That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to state to his majesty the humble advice and request of this House, that he would be graciously pleased to take into his royal consideration the calamitous state of his kingdom of Ireland; and that when, under the blessings of Divine Providence, the rebellion now existing in that kingdom shall have been suppressed, such a system of conciliation may be adopted as may tend most effectually and most speedily to restore to that afflicted country the blessings of peace and good government: and also to implore his majesty, in the administration of the affairs of Ireland, to employ such persons as may possess the confidence of the people, and ensure to them the permanence of a just and lenient system of government.”

After a debate of some length, the House divided: Contents, 18; Proxies, 3—21. Not Contents, 34; Proxies, 17—51.

The Duke of Bedford then moved the following Resolution:

“That this House, understanding it to be a matter of public notoriety, that the system of coercion has been enforced in Ireland with a rigour shocking to humanity and particularly that scourges and other tortures have been employed for the purpose of extorting confessions; a practice justly held in abhorrence in every civilized part of the world; and ‘that ‘houses and buildings have been set fire ‘to; a mode of punishment that can lead ‘only to the most pernicious consequences, ‘and that seldom or never falls on the ‘guilty, but, on the contrary, on the land- ‘lord, or the wife and children of the cri- ‘minals; who, however iniquitous the ‘husband or father, ought always to be ‘spared and protected;’ is of opinion, that an immediate stop should be put to practices so disgraceful to the British name; and that our best hopes of restoring tranquillity to Ireland, must arise from a change of system, as far as depends on

the executive government, together with a removal from their stations of those persons by whose advice those atrocities have been perpetrated, and with regard to whom the afflicted people of Ireland can feel no sentiments but those of resentment and terror.”

After a long debate, in which lord Holland and other noblemen supported the motion, and lords Grenville, Spencer, and the bishop of Rochester, opposed it, the House divided: Contents, 17; Proxies, 3—20. Not Contents, 44; Proxies, 19—63.

Protest on the Rejection on the Duke of Bedford's Motion for a Change of System in Ireland.] The following Protests were entered upon the Journals:

“Dissentient,

1. “Because I was shocked that an address to the king, upon so awful a subject as the present state of Ireland, should have been rejected, without one single syllable being said by the king's ministers upon the subject.

2. “Because, I look back with pride to that law which our ancestors obtained, which says, ‘No free man shall be taken, ‘or imprisoned, or disseized of his freehold ‘or liberties, or free customs, or be out- ‘lawed, or exiled, or any otherwise de- ‘stroyed. Nor will we not pass upon him, ‘nor condemn him, but by lawful judg- ‘ment of his peers, or by the law of the ‘land. We will sell to no man. We will ‘not deny or defer to any man either jus- ‘tice or right.’ And because I agree with the commentary of that great lawyer sir Edward Coke upon this chapter of Magna Charta, wherein he says, ‘No man ‘destroyed;’ that is fore-judged of life or limb, disherited, or put to torture or death. And because I think that to flog, picket, and half hang any our fellow subjects, in order to extort confession, is, ‘a putting to ‘torture,’ and therefore, not only outrageous to humanity, but directly against Magna Charta, the great corner stone of our laws and liberties. And whoever have dared to put to torture any of our fellow subjects in Ireland, or elsewhere, have violated the great charter, have betrayed their country, and ought speedily to be brought to condign punishment, for these their treasonable practices. And whoever have dared openly and publicly to justify torture, upon the ground of policy, deserve the same execrations from their countrymen as have been usually

given to the cruellest inquisitors of Rome.

3. "Because, whenever our brethren and fellow subjects in Ireland or elsewhere, are flogged, picketed, half-hanged, and otherwise tortured, in order to extort confession, I hold it to be the bounden duty of every man, in his different station, to use all the legal means in his power to declare his abhorrence of such diabolical and tyrannical measures.

4. "Because I hold, that when an Irishman is tortured, an Englishman is tortured; for the same men, who, in violation of the laws of their country, and of every dictate of humanity, dare to put Irishmen to torture, will not hesitate, when they think it expedient, to put Englishmen to torture also.

5. "Because it is a mortal truth that cannot be denied, that if men have been driven, by flogging and by tortures, contrary to all law and reason, into open resistance, the guilt and consequences of that resistance are imputable to those who flog and torture contrary to all law and reason, and not to those who are thereby driven to resistance.

6. "Because to flog and torture men in open resistance, for the sake of employing a power in the hands of those who flog and torture, to crush that resistance, and thereby to make themselves more secure, is not only a refinement of cruelty, against which law, reason, justice, humanity, and nature, cry aloud; but which the experience of all times teaches us will never answer.

7. "Because the history of the world tells us, that it is no small matter which provokes a people to throw off their allegiance, and that when they have thrown off their allegiance, attention to their just demands, and protection in the enjoyment of their rights, liberties, and properties, are the only means by which an allegiance worth having can be recovered.

8. "Because I think the times call for a declaration of these principles, and that to act upon them is the only method of healing the present discontents, and preventing the speedy ruin of our country.

"OXFORD AND MORTIMER."

"Dissentient,

"Because the House having thought fit to reject the various motions respecting the calamitous situation of Ireland, which have been submitted to their consideration, in the first instance for inquiry—in the second for lenity and conciliation—and in the last for putting an immediate

stop at least to the rigorous proceedings of the army in Ireland, where, under the name of a system of coercion we have reason to fear that atrocious cruelties have been practised, we think it our duty to record the nature of the evidence on which we have proceeded, and on which our conviction of the truth of the facts is founded, and on that evidence to appeal in our own justification to our country, to the world, and to posterity. We affirm, that the facts are undisputed, that the evidence of them is irresistible, and that the effects produced by this barbarous system, convict the authors and advisers of such a total want of wisdom, even for their own pretended purposes, as can only be exceeded by the shocking cruelty of the principles avowed, and of the practice recommended by them. We shall state some of the documents we refer to, in the order of time in which they have appeared, in order to show that this system of coercion has not been hastily resorted to on the spur of an instant necessity, but that it was deliberately resolved on long before it could be justified or palliated by any of the pretences or causes which have since been assigned in defence of it.

'*Dublin Castle March 3, 1797.*

'His excellency further authorizes you
'to employ force against any persons as-
'sembled in arms, not legally authorized
'so to be, and to disperse all tumult-
'uous assemblies of persons, though
'they may not be in arms, without
'waiting for the sanction and assistance
'of the civil authority, if in your opinion
'the peace of the realm and the safety of
'his majesty's faithful subjects may be
'endangered by waiting for such autho-
'rity.—(Signed) THOMAS PELHAM.'

"On the 26th of February, 1798, sir Ralph Abercromby declared in public orders that 'the very disgraceful fre-
'quency of courts martial, and the many
'complaints of irregularities in the con-
'duct of the troops in that kingdom, had
'too unfortunately proved the army to be
'in a state of licentiousness, which must
'render it formidable to every one but
'the enemy.'

"On the 18th of April, 1798, the following order was issued by major-general Duff:—"The commander in chief gives
'this public notice, that the lord lieute-
'nant and council have issued orders to
'him to quarter troops, to press horses
'and carriages, to demand forage and
'provisions, and to hold courts martial

‘ for the trial of offences of all descriptions,
 ‘ civil and military, with the power of
 ‘ confirming and carrying into execution
 ‘ the sentences of all such courts martial,
 ‘ and to issue proclamations. The com-
 ‘ mander in chief calls on the general
 ‘ officers to procure of the magistrates the
 ‘ best accounts they can give of the num-
 ‘ ber of arms taken from the yeomanry
 ‘ and the well affected, of arms that have
 ‘ been concealed, and of pikes, that have
 ‘ been made, which are to be recovered
 ‘ and taken possession of by the military.
 ‘ They are also to communicate to the
 ‘ people through the priests, and by one
 ‘ or two men selected from each town-
 ‘ land, the purport of the following notice:
 ‘ That the order, if complied with, will be
 ‘ a sign of their general repentance; and
 ‘ not only forgiveness will follow, but
 ‘ protection. That they must be sensible
 ‘ that it is infinitely better for them to
 ‘ remain at home, quietly minding their
 ‘ own affairs, than committing acts which
 ‘ must bring on the ruin of themselves and
 ‘ of their families.—As it will be impos-
 ‘ sible, in some degree, to prevent the
 ‘ innocent from suffering with the guilty,
 ‘ the innocent have means of redress by
 ‘ informing against those who have en-
 ‘ gaged in unlawful associations, and of
 ‘ robbing houses of arms and money.
 ‘ The people must be very ignorant not
 ‘ to know that, notwithstanding the fair
 ‘ promises of the French, that they have
 ‘ first deceived, and then plundered every
 ‘ country into which they have come.
 ‘ And they are therefore forewarned, that
 ‘ in case of invasion from the French, if
 ‘ they should attempt to join the enemy,
 ‘ or communicate with him, or join in any
 ‘ insurrection, they will be immediately
 ‘ put to death, and their houses and pro-
 ‘ perties destroyed. The general officers
 ‘ call to the people to know why they
 ‘ should be less attached to the govern-
 ‘ ment now, than they were a year ago,
 ‘ when they showed so much loyalty in
 ‘ assisting his majesty’s troops to oppose
 ‘ the landing of the French? Is it not
 ‘ because they have been seduced by
 ‘ wicked men? Why should they think
 ‘ themselves bound by oaths into which
 ‘ they have been seduced or terrified?
 ‘ The people are requested to bring in
 ‘ their arms to the magistrates or com-
 ‘ manding officers in the neighbourhood,
 ‘ who have directions to receive them, and
 ‘ no questions will be asked.

‘ (Signed) JAMES DUFF, Maj. Gen.’
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“ On the 7th of May, 1798, the follow-
 ing orders were issued by lieutenant-
 general sir James Steward: ‘ Whereas it
 ‘ has been represented to lieutenant-ge-
 ‘ neral sir James Steward, that in some
 ‘ parts of the country where it has been
 ‘ necessary to station troops at free quar-
 ‘ ters for the restoration of public tran-
 ‘ quillity, that general subscriptions of
 ‘ money have been entered into by the
 ‘ inhabitants to purchase provisions for
 ‘ the troops, by which means the end pro-
 ‘ posed, of making the burthen fall as
 ‘ much as possible on the guilty, is en-
 ‘ tirely defeated, by making it fall in a
 ‘ light proportion on the whole, and
 ‘ thereby easing and protecting the guilty.
 ‘ It has been thought proper to direct,
 ‘ that wherever that practice has been
 ‘ adopted, or shall be attempted, the
 ‘ general officers, commanding divisions
 ‘ of the southern district, shall imme-
 ‘ diately double, treble, or quadruple the
 ‘ number of soldiers so stationed, and
 ‘ shall send out regular foraging parties to
 ‘ provide provisions for the troops, in the
 ‘ quantities mentioned in the former no-
 ‘ tice, bearing date the 27th day of April,
 ‘ 1798; and that they shall move them
 ‘ from station through the district or
 ‘ barony, until all arms are surrendered,
 ‘ and tranquillity be perfectly restored,
 ‘ and until it is reported to the general
 ‘ officers, by the gentlemen holding land-
 ‘ ed property, and those who are em-
 ‘ ployed in collecting the public revenues
 ‘ and tithes, that all rents, taxes, and
 ‘ tithes are completely paid up.—Adjutant
 ‘ General’s Office, Cork, May 7th, 1798.’

“ On the 11th of June, 1798, major-
 general Nugent, after holding out certain
 offers and terms to the insurgents, pro-
 ceeds to declare, ‘ That, should the above
 ‘ injunctions not be complied with within
 ‘ the time specified, major-general Nugent
 ‘ will proceed to set fire to and totally
 ‘ destroy the towns of Killinchy, Killi-
 ‘ leagh, Ballynahinch, Sallitfield, and
 ‘ every cottage and farm-house in the
 ‘ vicinity of those places, carry off the
 ‘ stock and cattle, and put every one to
 ‘ the sword who may be found in arms.
 ‘ It particularly behoves all the well-
 ‘ affected persons, who are now with the
 ‘ rebels, from constraint, and who it is
 ‘ known form a considerable part of their
 ‘ numbers, to exert themselves in having
 ‘ these terms complied with, as it is the
 ‘ only opportunity there will be of rescu-
 ‘ ing themselves and properties from the

' indiscriminate vengeance of an army
' necessarily let loose upon them.'

" But finally, the document which appears to us the most important of all, and to which we earnestly invite and press the attention of the House is, a public order issued about the middle of the present month of June, 1798, in the following words: ' Major-general Morrison requests
' that officers commanding corps will give
' the strictest orders to prevent setting
' fire to houses or buildings of any kind, a
' mode of punishment that can lead only
' to the most pernicious consequences,
' and that seldom or never falls on the
' guilty, but on the contrary, on the land-
' lord, the wife and children of the crimi-
' nals, who, however iniquitous the hus-
' band or father, ought always to be
' spared and protected. And he has like-
' wise received orders from lieutenant-
' general Lake, that free quarters are no
' longer to be permitted, neither are
' foraging parties to be allowed to go out,
' unless under the care of an officer, who
' is to be responsible for every act, in
' order that the friends of government,
' the helpless and infirm, may not be in-
' volved in one indiscriminate mass of
' destruction with the rebellious and ill-
' disposed.'

" The prohibition contained in this order, wise and humane as it is, is equivalent to a history of all the horrible transactions it alludes to, and establishes the truth of them by evidence, which cannot be disputed or suspected, and also confirms in the strongest terms, and on the irresistible proof derived from practice and experience, that such a mode of punishment ' seldom or never falls on the
' guilty, but on women and children, who
' ought always to be spared and protected,' and that its principle, if not only operation and effect, is ' to involve the friends
' of government, the helpless and the in-
' firm, in one indiscriminate mass of de-
' struction with the rebellious and ill-
' disposed.'

(Signed) BEDFORD,
WENTWORTH FITZWILLIAM,
PONSONBY,
HOLLAND,
ALBEMARLE,
KING,
THANET."

The Speaker's Speech to the King at the Close of the Session.] June 29. The King came this day to the House of Peers.

His Majesty being seated on the throne, the Speaker of the House of Commons addressed his Majesty as follows :

" Most gracious Sovereign ;

" Your faithful Commons humbly attend your majesty with the bills which close the supply for the public service of the year. In providing for the effectual prosecution of the contest in which this country is engaged, your Commons have been actuated by the conviction that no alternative remained ; and that it was only from the extraordinary efforts which the crisis demanded, that the means could be derived of maintaining the honour of your majesty's crown, and the security and independence of the British empire. Considerations of temporary convenience have accordingly given way to the urgent duty of combining the attention, so peculiarly important at this time, to the support and stability of public credit, with a determination to make an ample provision for the several branches of the public service. To these objects the deliberations of your Commons have been diligently applied ; and they have observed, with pride and satisfaction, that the unexampled sacrifices, which the state of public affairs appeared to them indispensably to require, have been accompanied by such demonstrations of loyalty and zeal, from all classes of their fellow subjects, by voluntary exertions of every description, to such an amount and extent, as to afford the best comment on the hopes, and the most decisive answer to the misrepresentations upon which the enemy must have founded the vain and presumptuous project of destroying the commercial prosperity, the maritime greatness, and liberties of these kingdoms.—Your Commons, Sire, are gratified by the persuasion that their proceedings have been in all respects strictly conformable to the interests and the sentiments of a free and intelligent people, who consider no efforts too great which may be necessary to frustrate the designs, and repel the attempts of the enemy ; and to preserve that constitution which they know to be the guardian of all that is most dear and valuable to themselves, and the best inheritance that can be transmitted to their descendants. The bills which I have in my hand are severally intituled, &c. &c." He then presented the said bills, to which he requested his majesty's royal assent.

The King's Speech at the Close of the

Session.] After the royal assent had been given to the said bills, his Majesty made the following Speech to both Houses :

“ My Lords, and Gentlemen ;

“ By the measures adopted during the present session, you have amply fulfilled the solemn and unanimous assurances which I received from you at its commencement. The example of your firmness and constancy has been applauded and followed by my subjects in every rank and condition of life. A spirit of voluntary and ardent exertion, diffused through every part of the kingdom, has strengthened and confirmed our internal security ; the same sentiments have continued to animate my troops of every description ; and my fleets have met the menaces of invasion, by blocking up our enemies in all their principal ports.

“ Gentlemen of the House of Commons ;

“ The extensive and equitable scheme of contribution, by which so large a proportion of our expenses will be defrayed within the year, has defeated the expectations of those who had vainly hoped to exhaust our means, and to destroy our public credit. You have been enabled to avail yourselves of farther resources from a commerce increased in extent and vigour, notwithstanding the difficulties of war, and have had the singular satisfaction of deriving, at the same moment, large additional aid from individual exertions of unexampled zeal, liberality, and patriotism.

“ The provision which has been made for the redemption of the land tax has also established a system which, in its progressive operation, may produce the happiest consequences, by the increase of our resources, the diminution of our debt, and the support of public credit.

“ My Lords, and Gentlemen ;

“ The designs of the disaffected, carried on in concert with our inveterate enemies, have been unremittingly pursued, but have been happily and effectually counteracted in this kingdom by the general zeal and loyalty of my subjects.

“ In Ireland they have broken out into the most criminal acts of open rebellion. Every effort has been employed on my part to subdue this dangerous spirit, which is equally hostile to the interests and safety of every part of the British empire. I cannot too strongly commend the unshaken fidelity and valour of my regular, fencible, and militia troops in Ireland, and that determined spirit with which my yeomanry and volunteer forces of that

kingdom have stood forward in defence of the lives and properties of their fellow subjects, and in support of the lawful government.

“ The striking and honourable proof of alacrity and public spirit, which so many of my fencible and militia regiments in this kingdom have manifested on this occasion, has already received the fullest testimony of the approbation of parliament.

“ This conduct, personally so honourable to the individuals, affords the strongest pledge both of the military ardor which actuates this valuable part of our national defence, and of their affectionate concern for the safety and happiness of Ireland, which are essentially connected with the general interests of the British empire.

“ With the advantage of this support, and after the distinguished and important success which has recently attended the operations of my arms against the principal force of the rebels, I trust the time is fast approaching, when those now seduced from their allegiance will be brought to a just sense of the guilt they have incurred, and will entitle themselves to forgiveness, and to that protection which it is my constant wish to afford to every class and condition of my subjects who manifest their desire to pay a due obedience to the laws.

“ This temporary interruption of tranquillity, and all its attendant calamities, must be attributed to those pernicious principles which have been industriously propagated in that country, and which, wherever they have prevailed, have never failed to produce the most disastrous effects.

“ With such warnings before us, sensible of the danger which we are called upon to repel, and of the blessings we have to preserve, let us continue firmly united in a determined resistance to the designs of our enemies, and in the defence of that constitution which had been found, by experience, to ensure to us, in so eminent a degree, public liberty, national strength, and the security and comfort of all classes of the community.

“ It is only by perseverance in this line of conduct that we can hope, under the continuance of that Divine protection which we have so abundantly experienced, to conduct this arduous contest to a happy issue ; and to maintain, undiminished, the security, honour, and lasting prosperity, of the country.”

The lord chancellor then, by his ma-

Majesty's command, prorogued the parliament to the 8th of August. It was afterwards farther prorogued to the 20th of November.

THIRD SESSION
OF THE
EIGHTEENTH PARLIAMENT
OF
GREAT BRITAIN.

The King's Speech on Opening the Session.] November 20. His Majesty opened the Session with the following Speech to both Houses:

"My Lords and Gentlemen;

The events which have taken place in the course of the present year, and the signal success, which, by the blessing of Providence, has attended my arms, have been productive of the happiest consequences, and have essentially promoted the prosperity and glory of our country.

"The unexampled series of our naval triumphs has received fresh splendor from the memorable and decisive action, in which a detachment of my fleet, under the command of rear admiral lord Nelson, attacked, and almost totally destroyed, a superior force of the enemy, strengthened by every advantage of situation. By this great and brilliant victory, an enterprise, of which the injustice, perfidy, and extravagance, had fixed the attention of the world, and was peculiarly directed against some of the most valuable interests of the British empire, has, in the first instance been turned to the confusion of its authors: and the blow thus given to the power and influence of France has afforded an opening, which, if improved by suitable exertions on the part of other powers, may lead to the general deliverance of Europe.

"The wisdom and magnanimity displayed at this conjuncture by the emperor of Russia, and the decision and vigour of the Ottoman Porte, have shown that those powers are impressed with a just sense of the present crisis: and their example, joined to the disposition manifested almost universally in the different countries struggling under the yoke of France, must be a powerful encouragement to other states to adopt that vigorous line of conduct, which experience has proved to be alone consistent with security or honour.

"The extent of our preparations at home, and the demonstrations of zeal and spirit among all ranks of my subjects, have deterred the enemy from attempting to execute their vain threat of invading the coasts of this kingdom.

"In Ireland the rebellion which they had instigated has been curbed and repressed; the troops which they landed for its support have been compelled to surrender; and the armaments since destined for the same purpose have, by the vigilance and activity of my squadrons, been captured or dispersed.

"The views and principles of those, who, in concert with our inveterate enemy, have long planned the subversion of our constitution, have been fully detected and exposed, and their treasons made manifest to the world. Those whom they had misled or seduced must now be awakened to their duty: and a just sense of the miseries and horrors which these traitorous designs have produced must impress on the minds of all my faithful subjects the necessity of continuing to repel with firmness every attack on the laws and established government of their country.

"Gentlemen of the House of Commons;

"Under the unavoidable pressure of protracted war, it is a great satisfaction to me to observe, that the produce of the public revenue has proved fully adequate to the increase of our permanent expenditure; that the national credit has been maintained and improved; and that the commerce and industry of my subjects have continued to increase and flourish in a degree hitherto unknown.

"The situation in which we are placed, unhappily renders the continuance of heavy expenses indispensable for the public safety. But the state of our resources, and the good sense and public spirit which prevail through every part of my kingdom, will, I trust, enable you to provide the necessary supplies, without essential inconvenience to my people, and with as little addition as possible to the permanent burthens of the state. The progress made towards such a system, by the measures adopted in the last session, and the aid given to public credit by the plan for the redemption of the land tax, have been attended with the most beneficial effects, which you will, I am persuaded, omit no opportunity to confirm and improve.

" My Lords, and Gentlemen ;

" I rely with confidence on the continuance of your exertions to enable me ultimately to conduct the great contest in which we are engaged to a safe and honourable conclusion.

" We have surmounted many and great difficulties. Our perseverance in a just cause has been rewarded with distinguished success ; and our present situation, compared with that of other countries, sufficiently proves how much, in a period of general danger and calamity, the security and happiness of the British nation have depended (under the blessing of Providence) on its own constancy, its energy, and its virtue."

Debate in the Lords on the Address of Thanks.] His Majesty and the House of Commons having retired, the Speech was read by the lord chancellor, and also by the clerk at the table. After which,

The Earl of *Darnley* said :—My Lords, I should rise with peculiar diffidence if I were not well assured that every sentiment that can be expressed, however deficient in energy and force, must necessarily accord with the feelings of every man who hears me. For who is there among any description of his majesty's subjects, who does not feel that this is indeed a proud day for his country ? Under these impressions, I shall proceed with much satisfaction to a consideration of the different topics of his majesty's speech, on which the address I shall have the honour to move will be founded. I do not feel it necessary in this place to dwell long on the general subject contained in the opening of the speech ; persuaded, as I am, that every man must agree cordially with his majesty that the successes of his arms have materially conduced to the prosperity and glory of our country : I shall therefore pass on rapidly to that great event which demands our warmest congratulations,—the splendid victory obtained by the fleet under the command of lord Nelson at the Nile. This event is so eminently brilliant and decisive in its execution, and so important in its consequences, that I should do as little justice to the feelings of the House as to my own, if I forbore to bestow on it my full, though inadequate tribute of admiration and applause. The other naval triumphs which have distinguished the present war, unrivalled as they have been in the history of this or any other nation, are yet, in some

points, peculiar to this great achievement, eclipsed by its superior lustre, while, in another point of view, it may be said to have added additional splendor to them by filling up the little that was wanting to complete the measure of our naval fame. For in this instance, at least, no superiority of seamanship or manœuvring on our part, no want of every possible advantage of force and preparation against attack on the part of the enemy, can be alleged by them as a palliation of the most complete and signal overthrow that any description of force has ever received by sea or land. It has proved, beyond the possibility of dispute, that to such officers and to such men, nothing is impossible. In short, my lords, the exploits performed by the British fleet on the 1st of August, are unparalleled in the history of any age or country. When has the destruction of the enemy been so total and complete ? When have courage, conduct, piety, and modesty been so strikingly displayed in the leader ; subordination, unanimity, and intrepidity, in those he led to glory ? When, finally, have so many important consequences resulted from any one event ? This last consideration would naturally lead me to another part of my subject, if I could dismiss the glorious topic of the British navy, without calling your lordships attention to other victories which have been gained by his majesty's fleets since last we met in this place, and which, though lost in some degree in the superior resplendency of the memorable 1st of August, are yet highly important in themselves, and honourable to those who shared in them. For no one who considers the alarming state of Ireland will fail to estimate very highly the services rendered by sir J. B. Warren, and the other officers and men who contributed to the destruction of the second armament destined for that country.—I come now to consider the consequences which have resulted from the glorious victory of the 1st of August. The insane and atrocious enterprise of our enemies has received such a check as neither the abilities of Buonaparté, nor the enthusiasm and desperation of his army will easily overcome. Cut off from all supplies by sea, and in a country justly irritated by every feeling of indignation and resentment that can actuate the mind of man, we may fairly presume he can never succeed in his avowed object of injuring us in our valuable Eastern possessions.

But, my lords, allow me farther to observe, as I think I may without presumption, that the just vengeance of Heaven so long suspended, appears at last to have overtaken these destroyers of the human race. A great and terrible voice appears at last to have proclaimed to them that the sacrilegious profanation of every divine, and the unprincipled contempt of every human law, however they may prosper for a time, ensure in the end the punishment they deserve. Yes, my lords, the curses, "loud," not deep, of those who live under the rod of the Directorial power, the groans of Switzerland, the tears of so many widows and orphans, have not been heard in vain. Already the torpid spirit of Europe begins to revive. We have taught them that the "great nation" is not invincible; and that by resistance to its power the world may yet be saved. Already the emperor of Russia begins to wield the mighty force of his immense territory, and joined with his former enemies by a common sense of danger, is preparing to avenge their unprovoked and unprincipled aggression: while the Ottoman Porte, the old and firm ally of France, is justly become her most implacable enemy. Already the king of Naples, under the protection of the British arms, refuses to submit any longer to degradation and insult, and ventures to set the oppressors of Italy at defiance; while the inferior states appear to gain courage by his illustrious example, and their confidence in the same support. Let us also hope at least, that the favourable symptoms which have manifested themselves in other quarters will lead to a resumption of that energy and spirit which alone can save Europe, and civil society itself, from the unrelenting grasp of that monster, which has so long been suffered with impunity to devour every thing around it. But the mist is at last dispelled by our persevering exertions, and by the triumphs of the British arms. From our own experience, we have seen what may be effected by braving, instead of yielding to the storm: for when our minister was obliged to return from Lisle, after having exhausted every means of concession short of humiliation, and it became evident that our enemies seriously entertained the vain hope of reducing us to the miserable state into which so many of the nations of Europe had fallen—when they openly manifested their intention of pouring their victorious legions on the British

shores, their vain menaces only served to rouse the dormant spirit of the nation, and all ranks of men flocked to the standard of their country, by the sudden appearance of a great nation in arms, and despairing of success, they turned their thoughts to other quarters; and while the main body of the army of England are making an attack on the defenceless Egyptians, detachments are sent to Ireland, which country they had unfortunately too well prepared for their reception, by those arts which they have so successfully practised in other parts of the world. But here even, where their prospects of success appeared most fair, they have been completely baffled, and their forces captured, dispersed, or destroyed. The unnatural rebellion raised and fomented by them, in conjunction with those traitors who have been detected and punished, has been, in a great measure, suppressed, though its baneful effects still continue to disgrace the Irish name, and to hold out to the world, in hideous colours, the consequences of that terrible union of French principles and ignorant bigotry, which has taken place among that deluded people. The machinations of our domestic enemies, in conjunction with a foreign foe, have, however, been happily frustrated, and so completely laid open to the world, that the most incredulous can no longer doubt their existence. There is another part of his majesty's speech, which forms too interesting a topic to be passed over in silence. At the end of the 6th year of this arduous contest, his majesty congratulates us on the flourishing state of the national credit and commerce. At what period of history has the commerce of any country been so great, so extended, so universal? Our inveterate enemies, by their very attempt to injure us in our valuable Eastern possessions, have annihilated the small remains of their almost extinguished commerce, and restored to us, together with the undisputed command of the Mediterranean, the lucrative trade of Turkey and the Levant. When in the midst of profound peace have such valuable fleets ever reached our ports? At what period has a vast and productive capital ever been employed with so much judgment and advantage in agriculture, and in every species of internal improvements, of which a country is capable? The system of finance, which was so happily adopted last year, will, I trust, be steadily pursued. The

voluntary contributions, and the plan for the redemption of the land tax have succeeded beyond expectation; and, together with the other favourable circumstances of our situation, have raised the public funds in a manner unexampled during the period of any former war.—My Lords, the people of England are fully sensible of the inestimable blessings they enjoy—they know by what means they have preserved them; and, unawed by difficulties, will (I speak it with confidence) unite hand and heart with their king in enabling him to bring the great contest in which we are engaged to a safe and honourable conclusion. Encouraged by the past, they look forward with steady confidence to the future: they know, that great as their exertions and sacrifices have been, that still greater may yet be required, and are prepared to make them. The noble earl concluded with moving the following Address:

“We, your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the lords spiritual and temporal in parliament assembled, beg leave to approach your majesty with our humble thanks for your majesty’s most gracious speech from the throne.

“We beg leave to offer to your majesty our heartfelt congratulations on the glorious and decisive victory obtained by your majesty’s fleet under the command of rear admiral lord Nelson, over an enemy superior in force, and in the advantage of situation;—an achievement which has even added fresh splendor to the unexampled series of your majesty’s naval triumphs. While this memorable success has, in the first instance, turned out to the confusion of the enemy; an enterprise, not more distinguished by its injustice, perfidy, and extravagance, than by the inveterate hostility of its authors against every British interest, we entertain a just hope that the blow now given to the power and influence of the enemy will be decisive in its effects:—that the opening thus afforded will be improved by other powers, to the maintenance of their own independence and security; and that the wise and dignified example of the emperor of Russia and of the Ottoman Porte will be followed by such effectual and united exertions, as are alone suited to the present crisis, and as are best calculated to produce the general deliverance of Europe.

“Permit us to assure your majesty, that, while we feel our hearts and hopes

thus elated by the brilliant success which has crowned your majesty’s arms abroad, we congratulate your majesty no less sincerely on the uninterrupted state of security in which this kingdom has been preserved against the vain attacks of the enemy, by the extent of your majesty’s military preparations, and still more by the zeal and spirit which animate all ranks of your majesty’s subjects in the cause of their country.

“Nor have we seen with less satisfaction the entire disappointment of the attempts of the enemy against your majesty’s kingdom of Ireland, the defeat and surrender of the force which they had disembarked for the support of a rebellion instigated by themselves, and the capture or dispersion of the armaments destined for the same object: and we trust that the rebellion, thus cut off from foreign assistance, and curbed and repressed as it has been by the vigor of your majesty’s councils, and the gallantry of your troops, will, ere long, be finally extinguished.

“We are anxious to declare to your majesty and to the world our abhorrence of the views and principles of those, who, in concert with our inveterate enemy, had planned the subversion of the constitution of their country; and we cannot but feel persuaded that the complete exposure of these treasons must awaken the deluded to a sense of their duty, and must impress still more strongly on the minds of all your majesty’s subjects, the necessity of supporting against every attack the laws and government of their country.

“Convinced of the extent and value of the blessings which, under your majesty’s happy and paternal government, we have to defend, and confident in the resources and spirit of our country, we have encountered with cheerfulness many and great difficulties. These, by the blessings of Providence on your majesty’s dignified firmness and perseverance in a just cause, have happily been surmounted.

“Animated by this success, encouraged by the comparative situation of our country, and, above all, deeply impressed with a sense of that duty which is incumbent on every individual in a period of general danger and calamity, we will not relax our exertions, but will to the utmost of our power, support your majesty in every measure which may best contribute to deliver unimpaired to posterity, the security, independence, and honour of the British empire.”

The Earl of *Craven* said, that nothing could afford more sincere pleasure, than the description given in his majesty's speech of the present condition of this country. After being deserted by the allies, whose cause we had come forward to espouse, it was gratifying to see the noble stand that we had made, and the success we had obtained against the common enemy of mankind. By our single exertions the navy of the French Republic was annihilated. Her boasted army of England had lost even its title, and every enterprise she had undertaken against us was completely defeated. Not only our coasts at home, but our most valuable possessions abroad, were secured; domestic treason, aided by her means, was quelled, and the progress of her ambition abroad was checked, if not destroyed. He heartily concurred with the noble earl in the eulogium he had paid to the virtue and gallantry of our naval officers and seamen. He concurred also with him as to the advantages which would naturally flow from our recent successes. These successes had already given spirit to several of the foreign powers. Russia and the Ottoman Porte had already declared themselves, and he had no doubt but that Austria would find it her interest to join in the united exertion which the example of our government had recommended to all Europe, and without which it would be vain to look either for security or peace.

The Marquis of *Lansdown* said:—It becomes us all to join in the thanks which are due to our naval commanders; but, my lords, after this duty is performed, there is another duty which will rest upon the king's ministers and upon your lordships to perform; the duty of drawing from those victories the advantages they are calculated to secure. I am satisfied that it is of consequence, not only to the repose and security of Great Britain, but of the world, to check the progress of the French revolution. It is impossible to speak of the conduct of the French without reprobation; their course of havoc and devastation, their unprincipled and detestable tyranny, corruption and baseness, must excite in every bosom that cherishes the principles of liberty, a steady resolution to check their career. But, my lords, it is another thing how the progress of their atrocity is to be checked. Have we the power to accomplish it by the means which we have taken? Have

we not the experience of five years to prove to us, that we have undertaken the task in a way not calculated to obtain the end? What likelihood is there that we shall be more prosperous than we have heretofore been? I confess I do not see the means of obtaining the end set forth in his majesty's speech. I flattered myself that I should have heard of a well-organized plan, going directly to the object, in which all the great powers of Europe had concurred, and in which all other views and purposes were to be laid aside. It never was denied that, if at length a sense of general danger should bring the powers of Europe to a league upon honest principles, they must prevail over the revolutionary system, and it was my hope that ministers had improved the late victory of the Nile to this great purpose; and that before they came to parliament to announce the continuance of the war, they had incorporated those powers in a great and disinterested league, in which, instead of looking to this country for subsidies, they had resumed the dignity which became them, and had at length resolved on restoring security to Europe without seeking in its disorders their own temporary profit. My lords, I am disappointed to find none of this in the speech from the throne. I see nothing held out to me upon which I can repose. I hear no account of returning wisdom or of returning magnanimity. Who that knows the jealousies that subsist between the great powers of Europe can flatter himself that, until they are done away, any system of co-operation can be successful against France? Unless I see that a conviction of common danger makes them enter into a more generous union of effort than any that they have hitherto entered into, I shall not form any sanguine hope of accomplishing the object by the means of continental league. We are told of the vigour manifested by Russia and the Porte. It is impossible to hear this presented to the people of England as a ground of confidence and hope without astonishment. What! a conjunction between the Russias and the Turks? It is impossible to speak of so monstrous an idea without ridicule. Their mutual distrust and jealousy exceeds that of all other nations. The family upon the throne of the Russias have uniformly cherished the notion that Constantinople is to be a part of their inheritance. And what is the Ottoman Porte? Do we not

know that the most helpless of all the countries upon earth is Turkey? It is not merely incapable of external operations, but even of domestic defence. Is it from such a country that we can look for vigorous co-operation, or is it upon such a league that we can safely repose? Experience ought to impress on our minds a conviction of the hollow principle upon which combinations are formed. You have assisted the great powers of the continent. One of them contracted large engagements with you, and was enabled through your means to make valuable acquisitions. I do not find that that power has come forward to discharge its obligations; therefore I say again, that even if a new combination should be made of those courts that have hitherto deserted the common cause the instant they had obtained some miserable acquisition to themselves, we can have no prospect of advantage from such a league. Nay, my lords, if the jealousies of these great powers should again be stifled for the moment, I should not think this all that was necessary to the combined movement of Europe against France. I should demand the concurrence and the exertion of the northern powers also. It is material that the powers of the Baltic should join in the confederacy; but I see nothing of all this, and yet we are told that we are to continue the war upon the ground of hollow and disjointed combination, and that combination neither general nor disinterested. Are they less sensible of their danger than we are? Are they less liable to feel the atrocity of the French system? The security we derive from our marine, from our insular situation, and from public opinion, make us certainly more secure than any kingdom on the continent; and when we see that the foreign powers make use of us only for their own ends, can we again entangle ourselves with such confederates? I anticipate the reply to all this; "how can we make peace?" After repeated trials it has been shown that it is impossible to negotiate with the French Directory." Ministers know best whether they ought to have failed. I do not wish to exasperate. If they were sincere, I only lament that they did not take the course the most likely to obtain the end. The course that I have always recommended is that which is open and unequivocal. I would have your lordships to show by your conduct, that you seek no other object but security and peace; that

you will support the government who shall act upon this single principle. It is particularly dignified to make this declaration in the moment of conquest. Political situations are always changing. The French of this day, is not the French of last year; and therefore, however indisposed they were on the last experiment, it is now worth the trial. I do not mean that you should send to offer it, but choose the moment of victory to make it manifest that you look to nothing else; and that you are constantly ready and prepared to make it. After such declaration, should they refuse it, our course is clear and safe. Let us lay aside all idle plans of conquest and acquisition which we cannot maintain, witness Corsica and St. Domingo, and let us only think of cheap and economical defence. Let us refuse our assent to all continental intrigues, in which it is likely that the French will out-manœuvre us; for it is clear that in all the progress of their system, they have gained full as much by intrigue as they have by arms. Let us display a disinterested spirit in our system, and above all, mark our character by moderation. At home the crown has gained every thing. Opposition has disappeared—some say it is dead and buried. The present is a most favourable moment for securing the unanimity which now prevails. To conciliate popular opinion ought to be the great object. The attachment of the people is stronger and more valuable than a hundred parties. By keeping down the expenses; by introducing economy and order into every department of the state; by putting an end to the conceptions of influence; you can prevent the revival of party, and reap the true advantages of your present situation. I shall certainly give my support to every vigorous measure that tends to put the country into a still more advantageous position. I think it right that by one great operation of finance you should keep down those irksome, petty, and unproductive exactions which fret and disturb men's minds, and create an irritation which would again favour the views of faction.—We are told of strong measures which are in contemplation; rumours of an Union with Ireland, and so forth. My lords, it is not the time for me to pronounce any opinion upon that great question. I have no hesitation, however, in saying, that if the plan upon which we are in future to go on, is a plan of government by public opinion, it shall have my

countenance and support. I think that we are come to that point, when we must resume the good sense of our ancestors, and govern by public opinion, not by bribery, patronage, and corruption. When instead of looking merely to great families, we must look to the people; and when, instead of the grasp and range of influence, we must trust to the economy with which every branch of the government is administered.

Lord *Romney* thought the negotiation had been well conducted, and had produced the happy effect of convincing the people that ministers were sincere. There were some who constantly called the present an unfortunate war. It was unfortunate indeed, he said, on account of the expense with which it was attended; but, in all other respects, this country had never carried on any war that had been more successful than the present. He augured better than the noble marquis from our alliance with the Turks, on whom he bestowed much praise, for opening their eyes to the errors of their conduct towards France. And determining to oppose the French with the utmost vigour. As to the emperor Paul, his character deserved praise. The system of his internal policy was moderation. He had no doubt but a prince, so remarkable for virtue, would be faithful to his engagements. He had heard a rumour that Denmark and Sweden were arming, and that the other powers were making great preparations. He hoped the rumour was true. If the powers of Europe had made a common cause against the French, they would have long ago been successful, and the great nation must have given way to them. With regard to conquests. St. Domingo and Corsica were not the only acquisitions we had made; witness St. Lucia, Martinico, and the Cape of Good Hope.

Lord *Holland* said:—I confess it appeared to me, that the noble mover and seconder of the address failed to prove that which it was their great object to establish, namely, that the next combination of the powers of Europe will procure us an advantageous peace. No man can rejoice more sincerely at our late victory; but if the advantage we are to gain by it, be merely to revive the horrors of war, I own, I do not see any reason for exultation. I confess it has appeared to me for some time, that this is the disposition of ministers, instead of making it the means of obtaining that which should alone be the object

of all war—peace. Would to God, that such were the views of ministers! but the language of the Speech from the throne holds out a contrary sentiment. We hear indeed of the powerful effects of a new confederacy; but what is there in our situation, which should induce us to think that the confederacy about to be formed, will be more durable and efficacious, than those which have been tried already? All confederacies are liable to be dissolved from contrariety of interests, unavoidable accidents, and the natural jealousies which the confederates have towards each other. If so many victories cannot gain us peace, what is a new confederacy to produce? With regard to the union of other powers, and the reliance that we ought to place on their sincerity, let us recollect that we have not had one ally who has not deserted us. The late glorious victory ought to induce us to show a disposition for peace; for that is the truly wise use that should be made of the advantage we have gained. To show a disposition for peace in the hour of prosperity, is not humiliation, but magnanimity.

Lord *Mulgrave* said, that the noble marquis had maintained, that we were, under the present favourable circumstances, bound to come forward and offer to negotiate. But what was the situation of both countries? Were the governments equal in points of justice? Were they equal in point of sound policy? Were they equal in popularity? If they were not, was the present a time to crouch to the views of inordinate ambition? No. It was, on the contrary, a time for inspiring unanimity and vigour, and for rescuing from oppression the countries which had fallen victims to the boundless tyranny of the French republic. Great Britain stood in a high situation, at the head of Europe, offering her protection to the states threatened by the common enemy. Let them then come under her shield, which was raised for their security. The noble marquis had asserted that no systematic plan of co-operation could exist between nations jealous of one another. That Austria and Prussia were jealous of each other when they became parties in the coalition, he was ready to admit. But he would ask, was not the situation of those powers materially altered since that period? Had they seen no example of ruin produced by rashly indulging in sentiments of jealousy? They were at length sensible of the necessity of pursuing with

united firmness measures calculated to promote their true interests; and, with the salutary impression of past experience, he should have more just confidence in their present alliance than in that of the most amicable nations in a former war. The very idea of entering into any negotiation at present, and of consequently checking the reviving spirit of Europe, would not only militate against the substantial interests of the country, but afford an unquestionable proof of pusillanimity and meanness.

Lord Grenville said:—My lords; If ministers have been at all to blame, it is in being too forward to testify their anxiety for peace; facts and documents are on record, which will show whether the charge which has been urged, be well founded. But surely never was there a worse occasion than the present for renewing these questions. What has endangered the subversion of civilized society, and the overthrow of the system of Europe, but those shifting, selfish politics, which have this night been applauded. It is with pride and satisfaction, that I avow that I have ever submitted to you the necessity of a different policy. I have never advised any other than a vigorous, manly line of conduct, or recommended any resource but in our own constancy and perseverance. It has ever been my opinion, that if France remained mistress of the continent, we could have no safety. Disunion, mean and shifting policy, have occasioned all the calamities under which a considerable part of Europe groans. Now, however, there is something more than mere symptoms of the return of other sentiments, and the prevalence of other views. This, then, is not the moment for England to show that she is guided by a little selfish policy. Instead of resigning Europe to its fate, and abandoning the victims of French domination to their misery, it ought to be the business of England to animate their efforts, and contribute to their deliverance. Such is the system upon which I have acted, nor can any man so far mistake the principle of that system, as to imagine that ministers have been averse to avail themselves of any favourable opportunity for a safe and honourable peace. The noble marquis has observed, that those victories should only have been remembered which led to peace: and a noble lord has said, that the attainment of an immediate peace was the only legitimate object of war. I have ever un-

derstood, however, that those victories were the most celebrated which were gained in self defence, and that the most legitimate of all wars was that which was waged for that great object. To the fullest praise in both these respects, the glorious victory of lord Nelson is entitled. Notwithstanding what has been asserted, there can be no peace negotiated by this country, in which that great achievement will not form a leading consideration. These are the counsels which we have offered, and these are the principles which, in my official capacity, I have urged to the governments upon the continent. Shall I then, be told, that this advice has occasioned the calamities which have befallen part of Europe? What is the situation of those powers which yet stand in a trembling, degraded, precarious existence, purchased by dishonour? Look at those who have followed that course in which the noble lords opposite have recommended us to seek our safety. What impartial man will deny that the comparison justifies an honest pride, that the survey approves the system on which we have acted? We have endeavoured, in a moment of difficulty and danger, to maintain the honour and independence of our country and to support the liberties of Europe, and the proud superiority we now enjoy, the nation owes to its own constancy, its energy, and its virtue.

The Marquis of Lansdowne said, he would frankly own that he thought favourable opportunities for concluding a safe and honourable peace had been lost, and that for the omission, ministers were severely responsible. When the noble lord talked so exultingly of the schemes entertained for new coalitions, when he told us that we were to take the lead in Europe, he thought it a foolish, idle plan, which could terminate in nothing but confusion and disaster. He begged their lordships to read the collections which had recently been published, of the correspondence, of our statesmen since the Revolution and they would find how much our wisest politicians disapproved of continental connexions, the system of subsidies, and the attempt to take the lead in Europe. In his own time, he had known the noble lord's father to search the English language for epithets by which to express his disapprobation of such views and politics. To be at the head of Europe, to assign to one and to take from another, might sound high, and amuse the people of this

country, but it was an idle, vain, and delusive chimera. The noble lord had himself owned the difficulties he had to encounter in forming the coalition among the continental powers; and he had owned too, that to support the confederacy had baffled his skill. The duke of Marlborough, who possessed conciliatory talents in as eminent a degree as any man ever did, said, with that grace which was so peculiar to him, that it was some merit to have made eight nations act as one man. But great as the duke's talents were, he would venture to say, that were he alive now it would be above his talents to form such a confederacy, or to make four nations act as one man; nor would the noble lord find it easy to make even four nations act with concert and effect. Now that experiments were to be made at the expense of so many millions, and of so many thousand lives, he would say to the noble lord, You tried one experiment and failed, and we don't choose that you should try it over again. The noble lord has been deceived once, and I am afraid he will find himself deceived a second time. If I have any credit with the country, I stake it upon this sentiment. For several years I opposed the former attempt to take the lead in continental coalitions, and I now oppose the attempt to renew them.

Lord Grenville said, that his near and dear relation alluded to never entertained such a sentiment, as that the French should be permitted to cut and carve in Europe, which was now the precise question.

The Address was agreed to *nem. dis.*

The King's Answer to the Lords Address.] To the Address of the Lords his Majesty returned this Answer:

"My lords; I receive with the highest satisfaction this dutiful and loyal Address. Your congratulations on the brilliant successes with which it has pleased Providence to reward our exertions, are particularly agreeable to me; and I trust, that the honourable and dignified perseverance of my parliament and my people will, both by example and effect, materially contribute to restore the independence of Europe, and to ensure to these kingdoms the blessings of secure and honourable peace."

Debate in the Commons on the Address of Thanks.] The Commons being returned to their House, and the King's Speech read by their Speaker,

Lord Granville Leveson Gower rose for the purpose of moving an address in reply to the gracious Speech from the throne. He expressed his inability to do justice to the various topics of that speech. But, however inadequate his abilities were to the task, he relied on the indulgence of the House. Whatever difference of opinion had formerly existed respecting the origin and conduct of the war, there could now exist but one respecting the necessity of prosecuting it with vigour. His majesty had made two attempts to negotiate with France. Notwithstanding that country was far from being in a such a situation as to render it probable that its government could permanently preserve the relations of peace and amity, it was conceived that a dawn of reason had at last broke forth in France, and it was hoped that the Directory would see that it was their interest to make such a peace as this country could with honour agree to. The event, however, had shown how vain were all these expectations. It was possible for a country to be so much embarrassed, as to render it prudent in the government to make peace almost upon any terms. He should not enter into the question whether this was, at any period of the war, the situation of this country. Great difficulties we had certainly experienced, but we had happily surmounted them. The national credit was at one time greatly distressed. The enemy placed their expectations upon the overthrow of our funding system. The only alternative left us seemed, in the minds of many, to be national bankruptcy, or a more slow, but equally certain, national ruin. It was then that, for a moment, the public opinion wavered. But though public opinion ought always ultimately to influence the measures of government, yet a government which regarded the happiness of the people would never suffer itself to be influenced by those temporary fluctuations of sentiment which were inconsistent with the national dignity, and might, if not guarded against, prove injurious to the best interests of the country. It was the peculiar advantage of the British constitution, that it was calculated to remove false impressions, and to enable the government to lead the people back to a true sense of their interest and their duty. It was not necessary for the government to explain to the people that remissness on their part would be attended with their own ruin. They saw that the enemy would listen to no terms of accom-

moderation consistent with the safety or peace of the country. Terms had, indeed, been offered, but, fortunately for the civilized world, those terms were rejected with disdain. The spirit of the country was roused, and its ardour seemed to have increased in proportion to the difficulties it had to combat. It was this noble display of public energy which enabled the House, in the last session to raise the necessary supplies without any permanent addition to the public debt. The augmentation of the assessed taxes, by which this great object was effected, which gave a death blow to the hopes the enemy had cherished from the failure of our pecuniary resources, bore heavily on the great mass of the people: but the magnitude of the evil which they wished to avoid, made them consider its burthen as comparatively light. They were convinced of the sincerity of the efforts which government had made to restore to them the blessings of peace; and they saw the impossibility of attaining even a precarious and transient enjoyment of those blessings, but upon terms incompatible with their honour, dignity, or interest. Actuated by these feelings, the British people proceeded in willing concert with the government. In addition to the burthens imposed on them, they had come forward with voluntary aids to an amount which exceeded the most sanguine expectation; and, from a people unaccustomed to arms, they had suddenly become a nation of soldiers. The effect of this noble and generous display of national energy was soon visible. The French government were intimidated; and all their mighty preparations for the invasion of this country terminated in empty gasconade. The distracted state of the sister kingdom had encouraged them to make an attempt to dissolve its connexion with this country. In this attempt, however, they had been completely foiled. Their repeated expeditions to the Irish shores served only to involve them in fresh disappointments and disgrace. In their attempts upon that country they were aided by the co-operation of a diabolical faction within itself, powerful from the dominion which it possessed over the prejudices, the passions, and the superstitions of an ignorant multitude. This faction had supported itself by a system of organized assassination and plunder; a system, than which never had there been exhibited to the world, one more wicked in its end, or more terrible in its

aspect. But all the deep-laid schemes of the enemy, and of domestic traitors, were defeated by the prudence and perseverance of his majesty's ministers. The few troops whom the French government had, by a favourable chance, succeeded in throwing on the Irish shore, were soon compelled to surrender to his majesty's forces. This fortunate event was succeeded by the defeat of the Brest fleet. The Dutch ships, which had the same destination, were also intercepted, and, in short, every armament they had ventured to send to sea, was either captured or dispersed.—From these instances of British valour and discipline, it was natural to turn our view to the glorious first of August; that splendid achievement, which, in brilliancy and utility, was unequalled in the annals of this or any other nation. The consequences of this achievement were alike great, whether considered in a commercial, or military point of view. In a commercial one, by the new channels of trade which it laid open to the enterprise of our merchants; and in a military one, by its effect in rousing the independent states of the continent to resist the boundless ambition of France. That expedition, which had been planned against our East India possessions, had been rendered incapable of injuring them. It was cut off from all communication with France, and must be left to its own means as they were at present, for no reinforcement could be sent to Egypt. Not only had the destruction of the French fleet in the bay of Aboukir given energy and spirit to the Turkish government, but it had inspired all Europe with hope and joy. When the news of that great event reached Rastadt, the deputies of the empire for the first time ventured to resist the ambitious projects of the French plenipotentiaries. It had also encouraged the king of Naples to oppose the common enemy, and it was to be hoped that the time was not far distant when he would be capable of crushing the infant republics which had been erected in his neighbourhood. This great victory and all its happy consequences, were the result of the vigour, the unanimity, and spirit which had been displayed at home. The financial measures which that House had adopted, and which were sanctioned by the people at large, had enabled the government to detach admiral Nelson's squadron from the fleet before Cadiz, without allowing that fleet to be too much weakened for the important ser-

vice it had to perform. Indeed, the board of admiralty could not be too much praised for the judicious manner in which they had sent out reinforcements to lord St. Vincent's fleet. Another advantage resulting from our national spirit and confidence was, the increase of our national resources. Their present flourishing state was unexampled. Every branch of commerce had been more productive than in periods of profound peace. Some gentlemen might perhaps argue that this moment of prosperity was the best time for negotiating a peace; but they ought to recollect, that though ministers had no objection to treat with France, either on account of the form of its government, or the individuals in power, yet it was impossible to forget the character of that government. It was from their conduct to other powers that we ought to estimate the practicability of negotiating with safety. Look at their treatment of Switzerland, Spain, Austria, &c. Switzerland had resisted in vain, and was enslaved, plundered, and ruined, under pretext of friendship: Spain was reduced to the lowest degree of humiliation: Austria was insulted and deceived; for even during the continuance of the conferences at Rastadt, the French had taken possession of the most important fortresses of the German empire. When Russia and the Ottoman Porte have so magnanimously stepped forward in the cause of social order, when those powers that had by fraud or force been subjected to French domination, manifested a determination to throw off the galling yoke of republican tyranny, ought that House, by talking of an unattainable peace, to paralyze the efforts of the people of England in the common cause, and at the same time to blast the hopes of every civilized state of Europe, whose sole prospect of relief centered in this country? He concluded with moving,

"That an humble Address be presented to his majesty, to return his majesty the thanks of this House for his most gracious speech from the throne:

"To congratulate his majesty on the signal success which, by the blessing of Providence, has attended his majesty's arms, and particularly on the memorable and decisive action in which a detachment of his majesty's fleet, under the command of rear admiral lord Nelson, attacked, and almost totally destroyed, a superior force of the enemy, strengthened by every advantage of situation:

"To express the just pride and exultation with which we observe that, by this great and brilliant victory, an enterprise, of which the injustice, perfidy, and extravagance, had fixed the attention of the world, and which was peculiarly directed against some of the most valuable interests of the British empire, has, in the first instance, been turned to the confusion of its authors; and our earnest hope, that the blow thus given to the power and influence of France, the laudable example held out by the emperor of Russia and the Ottoman Porte, and the disposition manifested in the different countries struggling under the yoke of France, may encourage other powers to adopt that vigorous line of conduct, which experience has shown to be alone consistent with the security and honour of independent states, and which, if generally adopted, may lead to the deliverance of Europe:

"To assure his majesty, that we are sensible of the peculiar advantages derived to this kingdom from the extent of our preparations at home, and from the general demonstrations of zeal and spirit among all ranks of his majesty's subjects; and that we have seen, with the greatest satisfaction, the effect of the measures adopted in Ireland for repressing a rebellion instigated by our inveterate enemy, the surrender of the French troops landed for its support, and the successful vigilance and activity of his majesty's squadrons, in capturing or dispersing the armaments since destined for the same purpose:

"To testify to his majesty the abhorrence and indignation with which we have observed the desperate principles and practices of those who have long planned the subversion of our constitution, which have now been fully detected and made manifest to the world; and our firm persuasion that those, who had been misled or seduced, must now be awakened to their duty! and that a just sense of the miseries and horrors, which these traitorous designs have produced, must impress on the minds of all his majesty's faithful subjects the necessity of continuing to repel with firmness every attack on the laws and established government of their country.

"To beg his majesty to believe that we shall diligently apply ourselves to the consideration of such measures as may provide the necessary supplies with as little inconvenience to his people, and as little

addition to the permanent burthens of the state, as the circumstances will admit; that, under the unavoidable pressure of protracted war, while we join with his majesty in regretting the indispensable necessity of heavy expenses, we shall derive the greatest satisfaction and confidence from the productive state of the revenue, the maintenance and improvement of public credit, and the extent and prosperity of the commerce and industry of his majesty's subjects; and that we shall eagerly avail ourselves of every opportunity to cultivate and improve advantages so important to the public safety and welfare:

"To renew to his majesty the solemn assurances of our firm and unalterable determination to persevere in those exertions which may enable his majesty to conduct the great contest in which we are engaged to a safe and honourable conclusion; and, animated alike by a sense of the difficulties we have surmounted, and of the distinguished success which has rewarded our perseverance in a just cause, uniformly to maintain those principles, an adherence to which in a period of general danger and calamity has procured to us the advantages of our present situation, and will, we trust, under every vicissitude, continue to prove that the security and happiness of the British nation find the surest support (under the blessing of Providence) in its own constancy, its energy, and its virtue."

Sir *Henry Mildmay* said:—Sir, after the eloquent and impressive language in which my noble friend has prefaced the address, I feel doubly conscious of my own insufficiency to engage the attention of the House, and I intrude myself on their indulgence with additional diffidence and embarrassment. However the calamities inseparable from war must ever be the subject of unaffected lamentation to every feeling mind, this country, at least, enjoys the consolatory reflection, that it is to the conduct of the enemy alone, that these miseries are to be attributed, whose obstinacy and inordinate ambition have rendered the continuance of the present contest an evil without an alternative. It is fresh in the remembrance of us all, that offers of pacification, in terms of concession that nothing but the interests of humanity could have dictated to this country, have been held out to the enemy in the face of Europe; that they have as frequently been rejected with insult the most unbounded, and under pretences the

most inadmissible and extravagant; it is therefore now become a duty incumbent on us, to pursue to a conclusion the advantages we have obtained, to enforce by the vigour of our measures, the restoration of peace, on such terms as alone any treaty can possibly be permanent, or any established government subsist in security. In the attainment of this object, the speech of his majesty affords us the greatest possible encouragement; by recalling to our minds the unexampled successes that have attended the exertions of his majesty's arms, in whatever quarter they have been called into action. In the course of the last campaign, the naval annals of this country have been embellished by achievements the most brilliant and decisive, the most important and the most intrepid, that have hitherto been recorded in any age or in any history. The little vestige that remains of maritime power to our confederated enemies, have been blockaded in their separate harbours; and when the elements have enabled them to elude our vigilance, and to skulk forth on the ocean, certain annihilation has been the consequence of their temerity and presumption.—But it is not that element alone on which our fleets have ever been invincible, that bears testimony to the successes of his majesty's arms. The spirit of disaffection and anarchy in the sister kingdom, artfully fomented by foreign emissaries, and inflamed by domestic incendiaries, but for the vigilance and attention of his majesty's government would have broken every tie of amity and allegiance between Ireland and this country, and have erected on their ruins a Jacobin republic, under the auspices and protection of our inveterate enemies. These atrocious designs have either been repressed by the assiduity of his majesty's government, or frustrated by the successful dispositions of our military commanders, supported by the gallantry of our brave soldiers, who have spontaneously extended the limits of their services, for the patriotic purpose of securing to their fellow citizens the blessings of rational freedom and social order.—Important as these successes are, to the immediate prosperity of the country, to the security and extension of her commerce and the protection of her territory, in their probable effects on the state of Europe, the advantages we may expect from them are incalculable. The powers of the continent, who from policy, from timidity, or compulsion, have been

detached from the common cause, and have either joined in actual hostility to this country, or been awed by the successes of the enemy, into professions of neutrality, must have learnt by this time, by the experience of their conduct to Holland, to Switzerland, and to America, justly to appreciate the blessings of Jacobin fraternization, the solidity of Jacobin professions, and the security and sincerity of Jacobin faith; they must have learnt, that to an enemy regardless of every moral and every political obligation, it is a sufficient source of hostility and aggression, to offer an object to their inordinate ambition, to afford food to indiscriminate, insatiable plunder.—Deserted by the powers in whose immediate cause we embarked in the present contest, this country has stood forward, the sole champion of civilized society; single and alone, her active and intrepid perseverance has opposed an effective bulwark against the outrageous rapacity, and enormous ambition of the enemy; and by their recent humiliation and defeat, we have afforded an opportunity to the principal powers of the continent to unite in a general confederacy, to check the desperate and dangerous career of an enemy, whose progress they must uniformly have regarded with silent horror, and secret apprehension.—To maintain the proud pre-eminence we acquired, to carry to a conclusion those objects so essential to the welfare of Europe, some sacrifices may be required on our part—but they are sacrifices of which, while we feel the pressure, we cannot but admit the necessity and the demand. The inconveniences we have hitherto sustained, are, by no means, commensurate with the extent of the interests we have at issue; and it must afford infinite satisfaction to every one, to see, that even in the remotest corners of the empire, the public spirit has risen in proportion to the magnitude of the public exigency.—The hopes that have been founded on the failure of our resources, have proved a treacherous fabric, overwhelming our malignant enemy with disgrace and disappointment. Unparalleled as our external successes have been, they derive additional lustre from the increasing splendour of our internal opulence. The measures that have lately been adopted by government for the support of our finances, aided and assisted by the voluntary exertions of individuals, have had the most favourable issue, and baffle and set at defi-

ance the vain speculations of our inveterate foe.—The particular measure adverted to, for the redemption of the land tax, my own individual situation, my connexion and intercourse with the country, enable me to say, that no measure was ever more generally popular, or was more universally adopted by the landed interest of all descriptions.—Under circumstances so prosperous and encouraging, our fleets and armies triumphant, our revenue flourishing, and public credit daily gaining ground, we have little to apprehend from the efforts of an exhausted enemy; but we must not therefore relax from the exertions, or abate the efforts that have placed this country in the commanding situation she possesses. The ultimate object of the present contest cannot be accomplished, but by a steady perseverance; and in proportion as we look forward with anxiety and impatience to the termination of the war, so in proportion ought our present exertions to be animated, our present efforts redoubled, to reduce to the level of moderation and justice, the enormous views and gigantic projects of our ambitious enemy.—From the mutilated and almost annihilated state of the French marine, many years must elapse before they can again become formidable to this country: by vigour, exertion, and perseverance, therefore, at the present moment, we are not only preparing a permanent and substantial treaty for ourselves, but laying the foundation of peace, prosperity and happiness, to a generation yet to come. All Europe looks up to this country—the old and the new world expect every thing from the vigour and firmness of our counsels. I trust we shall not disappoint their expectations—that we shall unite with one heart and with one hand effectually to check the violence, and to humble the pride of our vain-glorious adversary; and by the vigour, the activity, and unanimity of our exertions, we shall prove that, however individuals may differ in speculative points, his majesty may repose the utmost confidence in the zeal, the activity, the perseverance, and the determined resolution of his faithful Commons.

Sir John Sinclair requested the patient indulgence of the House for a few moments, whilst he explained what occurred to him regarding the present state of the country. The first point which naturally called for the attention of every individual was, the battle of the Nile, or of Aboukir.

Some years ago he had employed himself in making an extensive inquiry into the various brilliant actions which decorated the maritime history of the country. But amongst them all, he did not find one that could stand a comparison with lord Nelson's victory. The most celebrated, in former times, was the battle of La Hogue; on which occasion we took, sunk, and destroyed, seventeen sail of the line, of from 54 to 104 guns; but on that occasion, the British fleet was infinitely superior in strength. Whereas, in the battle of the Nile, the French fleet was superior in number of men and guns, and in weight of metal; they were anchored in a bay full of shoals, and protected by every contrivance that ingenuity could invent. With such difficulties to encounter, nothing but the profoundest naval skill, the exactest discipline, and the most undaunted courage and firmness, could have given us the smallest chance of victory. In short, it placed the hero under whose banners the victory was achieved, and the fleet that had the honour of serving under him, at the summit of naval glory.—But, by the misconduct of our ministers at home, their laurels were almost blasted; the orders for the sailing of the fleet were shamefully delayed; and when it did sail, it was sent up the Mediterranean in divisions, and the gallant admiral was under the necessity of wasting the most precious moments in looking for his own ships instead of searching for the enemy. In consequence of these unfortunate circumstances, lord Nelson had not been able to attack the French armament at Malta; in which case both the fleet and the army of Buonaparté must have surrendered. The British fleet was unaccompanied with frigates, so essential for procuring and transmitting intelligence, which rendered it necessary for lord Nelson to send home a 50 gun ship with an account of the engagement, by which we lost the *Leander*; and no bomb vessels having accompanied the fleet, the consequence was, that the transports in the harbour of Alexandria had hitherto escaped destruction; and had it not been for an accidental circumstance, that the *L'Orient* drew too much water to enter that harbour, the whole French fleet might have been moored there in safety, and might have defied all our efforts. These were points which ought to be thoroughly explained. It was not sufficient that we had gained a splendid victory by the

skill and gallantry of our seamen, in spite of ministerial misconduct; we ought to know, why the expedition of Buonaparté was not totally destroyed. Why his army, as well as his fleet, was not captured; and why that hero himself was not brought in chains to this metropolis, which he had formerly proudly threatened he would enter as a conqueror.—The next point was Ireland—and here he could not help expressing his regret, that no notice was taken, in the king's speech, of the projected Union between the two kingdoms, to which he was a warm well-wisher. He would not dwell upon the subject at present; but he must take the liberty of stating, that the measure, in his opinion, was either rashly undertaken, or timidly postponed, or timorously abandoned.—He rejoiced to hear that the revenue continued in so flourishing a situation. He must take the liberty of troubling the House, however, with some observations, both on those financial projects which had been sanctioned last year, and those which were now in contemplation; and which had been referred to a new branch of the legislature before unheard of in this part of the island, namely, a body of men who sat in the Mansion-house of the city of London, and seemed to assume powers similar to those which the lords of the articles possessed according to the constitution of Scotland; namely, that of digesting and approving of public measures, previous to their being brought under the consideration of parliament. He deeply lamented having witnessed the introduction of such a system here; it was a public acknowledgment of the incapacity of government; and degraded the dignity of the House. He was very glad to find that the assessed tax-bill was to be repealed; but the principle of that bill, it seemed was to be enforced, by a general tax upon income. Without dwelling upon the many new and very delicate questions which such an attempt must give rise to, he must take the liberty of remarking, that it was not worth while to oppress every individual in the country for the sake of any sum that might be thus obtained, and at a period too when money, to any amount, might be raised by loan. He would recommend the House to adhere to the funding system, and never to abandon it until it had abandoned us. The wit of man had never invented a measure so complete and so unexceptionable as that of raising money for

defraying the extraordinary expenses of a state, by loans from those who had the circulating wealth of the country in their possession, and of imposing taxes to pay the interest, and to repay the principal. Such a plan might be carried on for years in this country, without the smallest risk of interruption.

Sir *Francis Burdett* observed, that he had seldom heard a speech made on a similar occasion that was more lucid in its matter, or more regular in its order, than the speech of the noble lord who had spoken first in the debate. There were many topics touched upon in it, which however he could have wished to have had discussed at greater length, and certain allusions made to the present and probable future state of this country, and its relations with the rest of Europe, which would have gratified him much more had they come to him from an official organ. The noble lord had dwelt with great exultation on the memorable naval victory achieved at the mouth of the Nile, and certainly every man must own that this brilliant achievement of our navy entitled our officers and seamen to every possible applause; but he must be permitted to say, that whether it benefited the country or not, would wholly depend on the wisdom or want of wisdom of ministers. From his majesty's speech, little else was to be collected on this subject, than that our victories were to be regarded as the signals of new expeditions, and the elements of new burdens to be raised on the people. It did not appear from it, that the benefit the country was to derive from naval victories would be peace, and yet peace was what the country above all things most required. It was to be apprehended from the speech, that the victory of admiral Nelson would produce an union of states that, before that event, were adverse to each other, and enable us to preserve the balance of Europe. He could cheerfully consent to our joining with the powers of Europe to obtain peace; but if, on the contrary, the ministers merely sought to instigate the country to continue the war without an object, he should consider the victory not as the forerunner of prosperity, but as the forerunner of calamity. In his majesty's speech, there was a studied ambiguity of expression, and it was, therefore impossible to discover what would be the measures of ministers; what the line of policy they would henceforth pursue;

what the sacrifices the country would be required to make to advance future measures of ambition or of security. There was not one word in the speech about our mighty allies; nothing of the zealous and august emperor of Germany, of the faithful and gallant king of Prussia; instead of these we had panegyrics pronounced to us on the wisdom and magnanimity of the emperor of Russia, and the prompt decision of the Ottoman Porte. But before he could consent to the minister's plans for the extension of our commerce, and for encreasing our prosperity, he must know what were the objects of the contest. It was not difficult to swell periods with "commerce and prosperity," but the man who should not be acquainted with the immediate views of the right hon. gentleman, would but ill discharge his duty to his constituents by implicitly confiding to him the preservation of the one, or the application of means to increase the other. His attention had been particularly fixed upon that part of the speech, that holds out the promise, not that we shall be able to procure peace, but that we shall accomplish the deliverance of Europe. To him these words were not intelligible. Would it be to restore Belgium to the Emperor that the country would again be made to empty its coffers into the pockets of that prince? Or to restore Italy to its ancient state, from the domination of France? He thought that all coalitions, if they did not succeed at first, would not succeed afterwards; and the wise of all ages had been accustomed to regard with much jealousy the recoalition of states that, engaged in the same contest, had, one after the other, receded whenever their interest consisted in the making peace with the common enemy. Did any man think it probable that successful war could be carried on against France by a coalition of the present mutilated powers of Europe, when she had already baffled the most powerful league that was ever formed against any country? When, notwithstanding her untoward circumstances, civil war raging in the interior, and upon her frontier the best armies in Europe; when she had to resist the combined powers of England, Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, Naples, Spain, Holland, and Portugal, their resources unbroken, their armies untarnished by defeat, was it possible to believe that she would now, with all her conquests and accumulated strength be unable to resist the new league thought

to be forming against her? And although internal dissensions should arise, we knew by experience how little influence internal disturbances had upon her armies and her external politics. But our foreign politics, although more important than at any former period, from the critical situation of every country in Europe, were almost unimportant in comparison with the policy of government at home. He should not now enter upon the situation of Ireland, but could not forbear remarking that it would have been more decent, at least, to have represented his majesty as deeply regretting the sufferings of the Irish people, and the severities, from whatever cause proceeding, which had been exercised in that unhappy country.—He now came to the last and concluding part of his majesty's speech. In the last sentence, and in that alone, he did most completely agree that we should all be firmly determined to repel any attack upon our laws and constitution. Had we firmly repelled the many attacks made by the present ministers upon our laws and constitution, he should not now have to complain of many and weighty grievances on the part of the people of England; he should not now have to complain of innovations made in the jurisprudence of the country; he should not now have to complain of an infamy guarded against by the laws and constitution, the interference of the executive with the management of prisons and treatment of prisoners; he should not now have to complain of every barrier being broken erected for the freedom of the people; he should not now have to complain of those bastiles, called Houses of Correction, where severities were exercised upon men not charged even with any crime, such as the humane old law of the land did not allow to be inflicted even upon the greatest criminals. He should not now have to complain of men being thrown into prison upon suspicion of crime, and after months of solitary confinement, turned naked into the world, their fortunes ruined, their health destroyed, their wives and families starving, or depending upon charity for a precarious subsistence. And this was the conduct of a government we were called upon not barely to submit to but with zeal and affection to support. He could not fall down with vile prostrations before his majesty's throne, and, like a trembling slave, lick the dust from off his feet. If his majesty was sincere in wishing to promote that

unanimity amongst all ranks of his people, so desirable at all times, so peculiarly necessary at the present time let the people be restored to their rights and liberties—let the old law of the land be again made the rule of action—let these new prisons, these receptacles of misery and instruments of tyranny, be destroyed—let a wise system of economy succeed to the present profligate waste of corrupt expenditure; and let the blessings of liberty be secured by a full, free, and fair representation of the people in parliament. It was to such a government that he would give his firm and faithful support; but at a time like the present, when the ministers, disdaining any longer to preserve appearances, had thrown off the mask, and shown, that not content with destroying the substance, they would not permit even the shadow of liberty to exist; when, after daily encroachments, they had at length set all control at defiance, and so wantonly, he would not say made attacks upon, but given the final blow to the constitution; at such a time, and under such circumstances, to call upon free men for unconditional support, was only adding mockery to insult, and injury to oppression.

The Address was then agreed to.

The King's Answer to the Commons' Address.] To the Address of the Commons his Majesty returned this Answer:

“Gentlemen; I return you my particular thanks for this loyal and dutiful Address; and receive with the greatest satisfaction, your congratulations on the late glorious events, and the declaration of your firm adherence to those wise and honourable principles which have uniformly guided your conduct. The perseverance and firmness of parliament, and the zeal and spirit of my people, will give additional weight to my exertions in endeavouring to improve the advantages which this country and Europe have every reason to expect from the happy consequences of the success of my arms, and from the present state and disposition of other powers.”

Vote of Thanks to Lord Nelson, Sir J. Borlase Warren, &c.] Nov. 21. On the motion of earl Spencer, seconded by lord Hood, and supported by lord Minto and the duke of Clarence, the following Resolutions were agreed to by the Lords, *nem. dis.*

1. "That the thanks of this House be given to rear admiral lord Nelson, knight of the most honourable order of the Bath, for his able and gallant conduct in the memorable and decisive victory obtained over the French fleet, near the mouth of the Nile, on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of August last.

2. "That the thanks of this House be given to the several captains and officers in the fleet under the command of rear admiral lord Nelson, on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of August last, who, by their bravery and good conduct, contributed to the glorious success of those days; and that rear admiral lord Nelson do signify the same to them.

3. "That this House doth highly approve of, and acknowledge the services of the seamen and marines, on board the ships under the command of rear admiral lord Nelson, in the late glorious victory over the French fleet, near the mouth of the Nile; and that the officers, commanding the several ships, do signify the same to their respective crews, and do thank them for their good behaviour.

4. "That the thanks of this House be given to Sir John Borlase Warren, baronet, and knight of the most honourable order of the Bath, for his meritorious and successful exertions on the 12th of October last, in the total defeat of a French armament, destined for the invasion of the kingdom of Ireland.

5. "That the thanks of this House be given to the several captains, and other officers, on board his majesty's ships which were engaged with the French squadron, destined for the coast of Ireland, in the month of October last, for their bravery and gallant conduct in the defeat of that armament; and that sir John Borlase Warren do signify the same to them.

6. "That this House doth highly approve of and acknowledge, the services of the seamen and marines on board the several ships engaged with the French squadron, destined to the coast of Ireland, in the month of October last, and that the officers, commanding the several ships, do signify the same to their respective crews, and do thank them for their good behaviour."

Similar resolutions were moved in the Commons by Mr. Secretary Dundas, and agreed to, *nem. con.* together with the following:

"That an humble address be presented to his majesty, humbly desiring that his

majesty will be pleased to give directions, that a monument be erected in the cathedral church of St. Paul's, London, to the memory of captain George Blagdon Westcott, of his majesty's ship *Majestic*, who fell gloriously in the naval engagement of the first of August last, when a decisive victory was obtained by rear admiral lord Nelson over the French fleet off the mouth of the Nile; and that this House will make good the expense attending the same."

King's Message for granting an Annuity to Lord Nelson.] November 22. Mr. Pitt presented the following Message from his Majesty:

"GEORGE R.

"His Majesty having taken into his royal consideration the signal and glorious service performed by rear admiral lord Nelson in the memorable and decisive victory obtained over a superior French fleet off the mouth of the Nile, in the month of August last, not only in the highest degree honourable to himself, but eminently beneficial to his majesty's kingdoms; and being desirous to bestow upon the said rear admiral lord Nelson some considerable and lasting mark of his royal favour as a testimony of his majesty's approbation of such distinguished service, and for this purpose to give and grant to the said rear admiral lord Nelson, and the two next successors, heirs male of the body of the said rear admiral lord Nelson, the title of baron Nelson of the Nile, and Burnham Thorpe in the county of Norfolk, shall descend, for and during their lives, a nett annuity of 2,000*l.* per annum. But his majesty not having it in his power to grant an annuity to that amount, or to extend the effect of the said grant beyond the term of his own life, recommends it to his faithful Commons to consider of a proper method of enabling his majesty to grant the same, and of extending, securing, and settling such annuity to the said rear admiral lord Nelson, and the two next persons on whom the title of baron Nelson of the Nile, and of Burnham Thorpe, in the county of Norfolk, shall descend, in such manner as shall be most effectual for the benefit of the said rear admiral lord Nelson and his family.

G. R."

Nov. 23. On the order of the day for going into a Committee of the whole House on the said Message,

Mr. Jones said:—From no man can come a more sincere acknowledgement of the royal message before us than myself. The victory obtained by lord Nelson is above all praise. The consequences are so eventful and eventual, that, if rightly followed up by his majesty's ministers, the noble lord may be hereafter (I think I do not exceed the mark), justly called the Saviour of Mankind. As to the armament itself, which is connected nearly with the object of the message, when it lay at Toulon, I often hazarded an opinion that its destination was India, but I could not find three people to agree with me. I am sorry I was right, and I hope that his majesty's ministers, and the directors of the East India company thought as I did, and took their measures accordingly.—Now, Sir, I shall pass from that long, awful, and solemn suspense which the nation laboured under; I shall pass, with the warmth of an Englishman, to the scene of action, that scene of glory to the British arms—that scene of confusion and dismay to the French—that scene of wonder and delight to the unlettered and paralyzed Arab—that scene of astonishment to the whole world! Here, Sir, I will observe on the immediate consequences of this victory as they strike me: from that moment the king of Naples felt easy on his throne, and ceased to temporize with the Directory. The cold Russian grew warm in the common cause against the common enemy; the proud and stately Porte forgot old animosities, their mutual jealousies subsided, their heart-burnings ceased, they shook hands, the tocsin was rung, the warwhoop was sounded through their distant regions with the rapidity of lightning and the tone of thunder, and thousands of armed men rushed forth, panting to crush an expedition engendered in horrible, diabolical ambition, concerted and carried on with hypocrisy under the mask of friendship, acted upon with extravagance and wildness of perfidy, unexampled in the annals of history, unparalleled since the creation of the world. I know not any word to call the expedition by, and I shall take the liberty to anglicize a word of their own for that purpose; the only one I think which can nearly reach its nature, Sir, I call it the last, though not least, *monstrosity* of that horrid, unaccountable, unfathomable revolution. I humbly pray that the Almighty may go forth with the combined fleets and armies, and that the

predatory army of Buonaparté (and such I may infer they are, from their general's address), may be cut in pieces, and not one man saved to tell the tale in Paris; that the armament (of transports) may be wholly destroyed, and that there be not a wreck left behind.

The House then resolved itself into the committee, in which it was resolved, *nem. con.* "That the annual sum of 2,000*l.* be granted to his majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, to commence from the 1st day of August 1798, and be settled in the most beneficial manner upon the present lord Nelson, and the two next succeeding Heirs Male of the Body of the said lord Nelson, to whom the title of Baron Nelson of the Nile, and of Burnham Thorpe, in the county of Norfolk, shall descend."

Navy Estimates.] Nov. 26. The House having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, lord Arden moved, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that 120,000 men be employed for the sea service, for the year 1799, including 20,000 marines."

After a short conversation, the Resolution was agreed to.

Nov. 27. The Resolutions of the Committee of Supply being reported,

Sir John Sinclair said, he hesitated not to declare his full conviction, that 110,000 was the utmost extent to which we could possibly go with any attention to propriety. The principal grounds on which he rested his opinion, were, the ruined state of the French navy: the skill and spirit uniformly displayed by our own; the assistance we were likely to receive from Russia, Turkish, Portuguese, and Neapolitan auxiliaries, not forgetting the new maritime power that was rising in America, and the aid which, according to report, we were to receive from Sweden and Denmark; the inoccupation of a vast number of our ships undergoing repairs or rotting in harbours; the necessity of public economy; and the prudence of a gradual disbandment of our soldiers and sailors, and leaving hands sufficient for the purposes of agriculture and commerce.

General Tarleton wished the House not to mistake what were the sentiments of gentlemen on his side of the House, respecting the importance of the navy to the country. He could assure them that not one of his hon. friends entertained the

same sentiments on that subject, as the hon. baronet.

The resolution was then agreed to.

Debate in the Commons on the Army Estimates.] Nov. 30. The House having resolved itself into a committee of supply,

The *Secretary at War* moved the order of the day, to consider farther of a supply which being read, the House resolved itself into a committee of the whole House.

Mr. *Windham* (secretary at war) proceeded to open the army estimates. The difference between this and the last year would, he said, be something more than one million. The objects which had created this difference were the supplementary militia, the provisional cavalry, the volunteer corps, and barracks. The estimates for 1797 amounted to 6,900,000*l*. Those of the following year were voted at two different times. The first sum (5,900,000*l*.) would have answered for the charges of the last year, were it not that other objects, not expected at the time the estimates were made, arose out of the situation of affairs that afterwards took place. The charges attendant upon those new arrangements, added to those already estimated for the year ending 1798, amounted in the whole to 8,305,923*l*. Besides these increased establishments, which were to be kept up for the ensuing year, there were some volunteer corps that had not been called out till the present time, and others that had considerably increased since the last estimate: on this account the estimate for the ensuing year would amount to somewhat more than 9 millions. There was one circumstance which had swelled the estimate of 1798 above that of the preceding year, and that was the augmentation of pay to the army; and, he apprehended, that was an increase which must continue. He declined entering into any arguments upon the necessity of it, because the subject had been amply discussed when it was first under the consideration of parliament. The right hon. gentleman concluded with moving his first resolution, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that a number of land forces, including 5760 invalids, not exceeding 52,051 effective men, commissioned and non-commissioned officers, be employed for the year 1799."

Mr. *Tierney* declared, that the public had a right to say that the secretary at war had deluded them; for, last year, the

danger of invasion operated upon the public mind, and much of the expense was incurred to provide against that calamity. Now, the skill and valour of our gallant officers and the steadiness of our men, had removed all fear with regard to invasion; and yet ministers held out no hope of any retrenchment. He should not vote upon any of the resolutions of that night, nor should he deliver, in detail, his sentiments upon them. He would only notice the speech of the secretary at war, as far as it regarded the subject of economy. He was sure there was not a man who heard him, who did not think there ought to be the severest economy in every part of the state. But while he said this, he was one of the last men in the country who would wish, by an ill-judged notion of saving, to damp the ardour of the people of this country. He wished not only that their force should be respectable, but that they might be made to stand in a proud and menacing attitude against the enemy. He would add, although by so doing he hazarded some reproach out of doors, that it was not in the salaries of public offices that he wished to see a general reduction, for he was persuaded, that, with a few exceptions, they were not overpaid.

Mr. *Pitt* said, he was inclined never to oppose economy where it was consistent with the due performance of public duty; but he would not lose sight of the sentiment which had been so properly expressed by the hon. gentleman opposite. That hon. gentleman had said, that this country should be put in a powerful and menacing attitude towards the enemy. But then he said that we had not the full advantage of our successes—successes which were felt and enjoyed by this country, while every other nation in the world beheld with astonishment and admiration the repeated exertions which produced them. It seemed that we were to forego every idea of an invasion of this country; and therefore we had an opportunity of attending to minute economy. He hoped the committee would not be so unmanly as to give way to that idea: he said unmanly, for he knew of nothing more unmanly than to catch at success, and to neglect all future exertion as unnecessary. Undoubtedly nothing could excel the splendor of our successes: they would in former times, and under former circumstances, have terminated any contest; but, what successes, what triumphs, what glory of her enemy could affect the disposition

of that nation whose rulers counted as nothing the interest, the treasure, or even the blood of their subjects? Therefore, with the best wishes for economy, he could not consent to carry it farther than it could be accompanied by prudence. We had yet to deal with an enemy of whom it might be said, that they were not limited by rules of law, or justice, or prudence, or by any of the maxims which governed the policy of those states which were called regular monarchies; for they had hitherto been totally uncontrolled by remorse, compunction, prudence, or humanity. They had shown a readiness to hazard their own existence for the bare

chance of destroying this country, or indeed of overturning the liberty of other nations. But, although they were at present discomfited in their scheme at the Nile, they might not have given up all ideas of invading this country; and should they entertain such an idea, how wild and chimerical it might be, it would gain ground in their minds, if they saw this country, day after day, weakening that force, which, while it was kept entire, would remain invulnerable. He was therefore most clearly of opinion, that we should increase, instead of lessening our efforts.

The Resolutions were then agreed to.

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